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PORTRAIT OF THE LABOUR PARTY

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by

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"Sozialdemokratischer Pressedienst"

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of
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PREFACE

IT was Sunday. The bus made its way through Whitehall, passed the Houses of Parliament—ashen in the early afternoon sunlight of May—crossed Westminster Bridge, and rumbled on through the endlessly identical streets, to the south-east. Strange, the odour of this new town! Never to be forgotten, the feeling of eternal disconsolateness of this Sunday afternoon in the London suburbs! Until I, who had thought that this journey would never end, was set down before a theatre by the bus-conductor.

How strange was this first impression of an English working-class meeting! The " Empire " was packed full of people, who, to the unaccustomed eye, were socially unclassifiable, and who resembled our German proletariat so little—indeed, not at all. Not so much because of their external appearance, although this clashed with all my notions, and seemed freer, franker, more careless. No, what differentiated this mass was its native hilarity, its good humour, its enjoyment of a general lark. These were not the stiff English of our preconceived ideas. How solemn, in comparison, seemed our own popular meetings,

at which I myself had spoken, in Munich, in Hamburg, with their earnest, oh so earnest ritual!

Even the platform offered to the foreigner an astounding sight. Here sat—a thing undreamed of—a parson with his clerical collar among the speakers of the Socialist Party. Suddenly, there was a movement in the crowd, and a young man, with the face of the ruling class in Great Britain, but the gait of a Douglas Fairbanks, thrust himself forward through the throng to the platform, followed by a lady in heavy, costly furs. There stood Oswald Mosley, whose later ascent was to be one of the strangest phenomena of the working-class movement of the world, a new recruit to the Socialist movement at his first London meeting. He was introduced to the audience, and even at that time, I remember, the song " For he's a jolly good fellow," greeted the young man from two thousand throats. Unthinkable that, in Germany, a man of barely twenty-eight years, a recruit, a typical aristocrat, a renegade, should have been so greeted by an assembly of workers, or should have let himself be so greeted.

Then the new man spoke; what he said remained for me—who at that time, dictionary in hand, was endeavouring to tear its secret from a leading article of *The Times*—for the most part darkling and un-

intelligible. But all the more unforgettable was the impression, the visual and oral impression, which the style of this speech made upon me. It was a hymn, an emotional appeal directed not to the intellect, but to the Socialistic idea, which obviously was still a subject of wonder to the orator, a youthful experience. No speaker at a working-class meeting in Germany would have dared to have worked so unrestrainedly on the feelings without running the risk of losing for ever his standing in the party movement. For the first time dawned upon me what, later, I came to regard as the characteristic of this British Socialist movement, that here in England there were temperaments, passions—in fact, individuals, all with their own particular style, not, as with us, *one* traditional party style, which the officials of the party, under penalty of the loss of their authority, dare not depart from. Here, even within the domain of a workers' party, so it seemed, was Liberty Hall.

But then came something unexpected, something that, by its spontaneity, shook me, although it was a trifling thing and seemed a matter of course to all those around me: from the audience there came calls; they grew more urgent; and suddenly the elegant lady in furs got up from her seat, and said a few sympathetic words, which I understood be-

cause they were simple and came immediately from the heart. She said that she had never before attended a workers' meeting, and how deeply the warmth of this reception touched her. She said this simply and almost shyly, but yet like one who is accustomed to be acclaimed, and, without stage fright, to open a bazaar or a meeting for charitable purposes. "Lady Cynthia Mosley," whispered in my ear one of the armleted stewards who stood near me, excited, and later, as though thinking that he had not sufficiently impressed me, he added, "Lord Curzon's daughter." His whole face beamed proudly. All around the audience was still in uproar, as at a boxing-match with us or a fair. It was the first weeks of the first Labour Government, and among the workers, in a circle stretching far beyond the party organisation and the Socialistic electorate, there prevailed a naïve and rapturous pride in the fact that by men of their class and in their name, their name, the mightiest empire of the world was ruled.

What a different world was this, a day's journey only from home! What an incomprehensibly different world! Where I had come from a Mosley would have had to serve for years in the outer darkness because he was Curzon's son-in-law. The party statutes would have kept him far away from any position of influence, and his claim for a constitu-

ency would have been disputed, with ironical laughter, interminably. With conscious and unconscious intent, he would have been humbled, made to feel that " he wasn't wanted." He would have been set to work in the obscurest and most insignificant places, and would have been mistrustfully watched to see whether he was genuine and no careerist. Where I had come from ambition was illegitimate, and he who had confessed to it was doomed for all time. Here, however, a Mosley was immediately thrust forward, in the middle of London, upon a public platform, and the crowd seemed to revel in his confession and his conversion, with all its impetuosity and ingenuousness.

A strange world, in which a worker, holding in the party a position of trust, points with pride to the fact that Lord Curzon's daughter is standing before a worker's assembly, and does not feel it as patronage—proclaims it without the apology and embarrassment which would be the case with us. How strange that, among these two thousand working-men and women, none appears to resent the furs of this woman, or to feel as a provocation her air of cultivated, easy well-being that radiates from her like an aura.

Strange also to the foreigner that it should be the woman who should be called upon, and that she,

being called, should, before a gigantic assembly, be able unprepared to speak a few intelligible, connected words. Who had ever heard in Germany of an assembly, and an assembly of workers to boot, that had shouted for the wife of a politician, in order to include her with her husband in an all-embracing sympathy? I knew nothing at that time of the great and fine tradition in accordance with with which the wives of politicians are trained to appear in public by the side of their men; knew nothing of the canvassing by the wives of parliamentary candidates, of all the day-to-day co-operation that is expected of them. With us at home, the politicians, and especially Socialist politicians, have no wives who can and will work for them (blessed be the few exceptions). Much heartbreaking has come of this, and many a career has been broken. Only diplomats have wives who count.

What I learned then at that first meeting and later in closer contact with the leaders and masses of the British Labour Party—how much more important are visual and oral impressions than reports and books!—was the wide difference between the German Socialist movement and the British Labour Party. Since then, many corrections have been necessary; but that first impression had nevertheless struck the right chord, which, like a mysterious

"Open Sesame," flung wide the door to this new world of British Labour. What, looking at the British movement as a whole, made the strongest impression was that completely different spirit, that different temper of the British movement, compared, say, with the middle and south-east European parties known to the author. Whether it was the pressure from without, the exceptional laws, the persecutions and proscriptions, that had made the Continental Socialist parties more dogmatic and disciplined, or Marxism that had given them a more homogeneous and uniform spirit—whatever it was, it is undeniable that, with all their differences, measured by the British movement they represent a unity—similar in their structure and organisation, similar in vocabulary and style, similar in leadership—similar, too, in that, owing to their adhesion to international Socialism, they have undergone a transformation to something spiritually and psychologically in opposition to what is specifically national in their country, however bound up they may be, in increasing measure, with its cultural life.

How different is the Labour Party! Without a past that sets it in opposition to State and society, it reflects the national characteristics of the English people, undeterred and untroubled by the other Labour parties of the world. It is more British than

German social democracy is German, Polish Socialism Polish. For this reason, it must seem peculiar to the foreigner, when he, for example—as was recently the case—sees in a Conservative newspaper the German Socialists held up to their British comrades as models of patriotism and moderation. On the other hand, in the reactionary German newspapers, men like MacDonald and Snowden, indeed the whole of the Labour Party, are always held up to German Socialists as examples, because they have a greater feeling of national honour, pursue a positive Colonial policy, and, in contrast to their German comrades, participate in the alleged conspiracy of " my country, right or wrong."

This lack of a Marxist foundation has given to British Socialism an immediacy in its consideration of practical questions, such as no other Socialist movement in the world possesses. Certainly German Social Democracy pursues more " Realpolitik " than its British friends. But the British Labour Party, even in its idealistic dreams, is more realistic than the German movement. Because it is completely unencumbered by philosophy, theory and general views of life, it is more adaptable, more elastic, more popular, and more able to absorb people who are outside the immediate framework of the working-class. It has an incomparably greater

self-reliance, an incomparably stronger will to power, and therefore—although not *only* therefore —incomparably greater chances of attaining and realising power.

Greater chances, not absolute certainty. For the fate of Socialism in Great Britain, the world-historical part that falls to it, both nationally and internationally, will only be decided in the next ten years; and it might well be that the present election is the touchstone of this decisive era of its existence. To-day the British Labour Party in many respects is in a position similar to that of German Socialism when, in 1918-19, it was called to power. Its situation is, indeed, much more favourable. The party is not only unsplit, it approaches its inheritance not only under normal conditions, but also it has had from time past the opportunity to prepare itself for its great task both psychologically and objectively. German Social Democracy, on the other hand, was called upon unexpectedly to liquidate a bankruptcy. It has used up its finest powers on the task.

But the position of the Labour Party resembles that of German social democracy in the years 1918-19 in this, that it has never yet been compelled to put its doctrines to the test—the first Labour Government under the shadow of Herbert Asquith being only too manifestly an episode that gave no

real clue to its true powers. Only after the Labour Party has obtained a clear majority, when it has shown whether and to what extent it can accomplish its aims, will it be possible to say what it is. Only after it has survived the inevitable disappointments, when the messianic hopes, nourished even by its doughtiest champions, are broken, and the myth lies shattered, will the stuff of which it is made be known. Only then will it become clear what the Labour Party stands for in the life of the nation and the International Socialist movement.

The experience of government on the Continent has borne heavily upon the Labour parties as Socialistic (though not as social reform) movements, and has checked the impulse of a whole generation of party leaders. The cleavage between reality and the faith in which they had grown up was too deep for them. The crippling sensation took hold of them that Socialism was not for to-day or to-morrow, and that, at the likeliest, it belonged to a later time which no living man would see. This crisis in their faith has made them sceptical and often cynical, and in many cases has wounded to the roots their capacity to act. All the more spectral, therefore, sound in their mouths the (to them) now empty formulas of the old semi-revolutionary Marxist propaganda. These older, now sceptical leaders, who have never

recovered from the shock of 1918-19, must, presumably, in a country like Germany, slowly give place to a new shift and a new type that has built up its faith on the ruins of disillusion, and knows itself to be in harmony with reality. It will be a generation before the social democracy of some of these countries again becomes Socialist.

It is, however, not only possible, but in the highest degree probable, that the Socialist leaders of Great Britain, in spite of the inevitable adverse experiences, the resistances and the gulfs between what was tried and what has been done, will retain their dream, their faith and their unbroken will to achieve. Brought up without dogma, committed to no theory, they will ward off with all the more suppleness the blows which they too will not be spared. It is the curse of all dogma that the smallest stone cannot be displaced without bringing the whole edifice of doctrine crashing to the ground.

And the masses themselves, the admirable English masses, of whom too little in what follows will be said? On the Continent, hundreds of thousands of the nameless, whose messianic hopes in a kingdom of right and justice were destroyed in the years 1918-19, have flung themselves into the arms of the Communist movement. Only, indeed, to receive, instead of the bread of fulfilment, the stone

of a new, eternally sterile dogma. Many of the best and most active combatants, the most faithful elements of the working-class in Germany, France and the smaller countries like Czechoslovakia have chosen this way.

But whoever has at any time seen the British masses at sport or a political meeting, whoever has observed their instinctive understanding of the difficulties and obstacles in the way of the accomplishment of a better order of society, and has learned their superb personal loyalty to the leaders of their choice, knows that they will offer a far greater resistance to the allurements of this extremism. Not having been fed on overweening hopes (like their comrades on the Continent, before whom hovered the dream of the overthrow of the present order and a world of equality and freedom), they will never suffer the deception, never know the clash between myth and reality, which has been the lot of those workers who have gathered round the Marxist banner.

Nothing in the whole of the present-day social movement can be more impressive, nothing more admirable than that here in England for years past over a million unemployed, or, with their families, three or four million people, have vegetated at starvation point, but have been too proud, too con-

scious of their human dignity to turn to extremism. On the Continent, on the other hand, we can observe how the slightest change in the curve of the economic situation and of unemployment is immediately reflected in the membership, up or down, of the Communist parties.

The attitude of the British unemployed in the nine lean years, 1920-29, is evidence of a heroism that in its very dumbness is moving; and that this attitude has been taken as a matter of course in Great Britain is proof of a complete identity of the nation with itself such as can be found in no other country of Europe in this age of the class opposition of capital and labour. To attribute this patience to lack of courage, depression and dejection, as is done by the Left wing of the British Labour movement, who always put themselves forward as the special champions of the working-classes, is to calumniate noble men and women who belong to the best that British labour has yet brought forth. In the attitude of the British unemployed is reflected a maturity before which the foreign observer can feel respect, and nothing but respect.

But this moderation and loyalty of the vast majority of the British working-class towards their leaders implies an obligation of enormous gravity. It is a trust carrying with it a moral compulsion

upon the leaders to strive, with all the tenacity and courage they possess, to adapt the existing form of society, within the limits of the possible and the attainable, to the legitimate wishes and needs of the millions, in order to secure for them a decent existence. Should the Labour Party fail in this its mission, Great Britain too will have before her a future charged with quarrels, disputes and social struggles in a measure never before known.

But it is not the intention of this book to meddle with the internal politics of a country whose guest for five years the author is grateful to have been. Grateful because, in spite of censorship, puritanism and D.O.R.A., he has learned there to enjoy a spiritual freedom such as no other European country offers; grateful, above all, because he has obtained an insight into the soul of a people that, although superlative in the praise of the qualities it imagines itself to possess, scarcely seems to be aware that, because of its political instinct, its inborn readiness to compromise, its capacity to humanise public life, it is the political nation *par excellence*, and that today, as ever, it is in this excelled by no other people in the world.

This political genius of the British nation gives the author ground for hope that Great Britain will succeed more rapidly than any other great industrial

State in overcoming the difficulties that must arise on the advent of a Socialist party to power, and that she will solve the political problems of economic democracy in a manner that will be a model for the other nations of Europe. For this reason, Great Britain's importance in the comity of nations has never before been so great as in this age of the struggle of the Labour Party for a parliamentary majority and, with it, power.

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EGON WERTHEIMER.

Angmering-on-Sea.
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Chapter I

STRUCTURE AND PROBLEMS

i: THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE TRADE UNIONS

THE foreign Socialist, undertaking a study of the British Labour Party, is met by the surprising fact that its organisation completely departs in every way from all that he has hitherto thought desirable and necessary. Accustomed to a solidly organised party rising like a pyramid on the units of the local branches, the interlocking organisational basis of the Labour Party and trade unions in Great Britain comes as a complete reversal of all his ideas.

On the Continent the various Socialist parties have for the most part been built up along the lines of individual membership, and owe their main strength to their small local groups, while the Labour Party, on the other hand, is predominantly a federal organisation. On the Continent it is at least theoretically possible that the trade unions could be crushed without inflicting vital injury to the political movement, but in Great Britain the relationship is one so close that neither can receive the slightest blow without its effect being felt by

both. The great majority of the trade unions are affiliated as corporate bodies and form 90 per cent. of the total membership, the balance being made up of individual members and the corporative membership of such Socialist groups as the Fabian Society, the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party, groups whose numbers in general may be stated to tend to decrease steadily.

The strength of the Labour Party organisation has always been dependent upon that of the trade union movement. Until the outbreak of war the difference in membership between the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party was extreme, as large unions such as the Miners' Federation still hesitated in their application for affiliation. In the last ten years this disparity has disappeared, and the total membership of the Labour Party has been on an average some 25 per cent. below that of the T.U.C. Its fluctuations in strength and organisation have always been dependent upon the fluctuations in trade union membership, and to all intents and purposes upon that alone.

In the years immediately following upon the war it will be seen that the rise in Labour Party figures was accompanied by a rise in trade union membership, even if the figures follow a little hesitantly. The rhythm of movement was syncopated. When

the membership of the unions affiliated to the T.U.C. rose in the years 1918 to 1920 from 4,532,085 to 6,505,482, Labour Party membership rose in sympathy from 3,511,290 to a total of 4,359,807. The Labour Party pendulum swung short of the trade union. Against this in the years 1921 to 1924, when the trade unions lost more than two million members, the Labour Party figures fell by only a little more than a million. The new rise in trade union membership in 1925 and the beginning of 1926 found its repercussion in the new Labour Party increase, considerably augmented however by new trade union affiliation.

In January 1928 the Trade Union Act of the Baldwin Government came into effect, artificially severing 137,500 organised civil servants and officials from participation in the trade union movement (and, as a consequence, the majority from Labour Party membership), and by means of its " political clauses " dealing a shattering blow at the whole financial basis of the Labour Party. Up to January 1928 every trade unionist per round hundred belonging to unions affiliated to the Labour Party became automatically a member of the political party, unless he expressed a direct desire to the contrary, a procedure known as " contracting out"; from then onwards a subscription to the political

fund of the trade union movement carrying with it Labour Party membership can only be levied if accompanied by an express individual declaration of consent, known as " contracting in." This Act, as was only to be expected, led to a 40 per cent. reduction in trade unionist membership of the Labour Party, and has decreased the total membership approximately to the same level as during the first war years.

The close organisational connection of the trade unions and the Labour Party has naturally led to a far-reaching personal contact between the Party Executive and the leaders of the great trade unions, although it is not usual for anyone to serve simultaneously on the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the Executive Committee of the Labour Party. Of the twenty-five members of the Executive Committee only twelve participate in their capacities as trade union leaders. The rest of the committee are also for the most part trade union officials; they do not, however, attend in this capacity but as representatives of local Labour parties and Socialist societies.

Apart from this, the unions play a further part by providing, indirectly through their affiliation fees to the Labour Party, ninety per cent. of headquarters' expenses, and in addition pay directly

for a third of the total Labour candidatures for the House of Commons. The names of these candidates are submitted by the unions to the local parties in the constituencies, and their acceptance takes a great financial burden from the shoulders of the local and national committees as all expenses are met by the respective unions. The influence of the trade unions has not only had tremendous effect on the organisation but also on the psychology of the Labour Party. On the Continent the members of the Socialist parties were recruited to ninety per cent. and more from the so-called " free trade unions," while the members of the " Christian " and " Liberal " unions entered the fold of the " Catholic " and " Liberal " parties. This individual membership of the Continental Socialist parties made each worker feel that he had entered the party as a political entity and not as a trade unionist. Trade union considerations took second place in his attitude towards the party, the Socialist party organisation proving itself always the stronger psychological factor, with the result that on the Continent the influence of the Socialist parties has always been stronger on the trade unions than union influence on the political organisation. For decades the trade unions were regarded solely as a recruiting depot for the Socialist party. In

contrast to this, here in Great Britain the trade union movement has always given its own complexion to the Labour Party. The unions entered the party as a body, gave a block vote at the party congresses and never relinquished their independence within the party, and in all important decisions represented primarily their own trade union standpoint.

This collective allegiance to the Labour Party as a natural consequence gave the trade union secretaries, agents and organisers extraordinary influence which was still further strengthened by the natural tendency of the party organisation in this direction. A Labour Party Conference, with its enormous delegations of miners and transport workers, mostly formed of full-time officials, appears quite a matter of course to the Englishman, but strange and bewildering to the foreigner. In contrast to this, the firm tendency of the Continental Labour movement is to avoid any duplication of function in both movements; in a word, not to send trade union secretaries and the like as delegates to the political party congresses. It is true that in the lists of parliamentary candidates a considerable number of seats are allotted to the trade unions, but the percentage is far lower than is usual in Great Britain. In these circumstances it is not

surprising that up to 1918, in the words of Max Beer (the historian of the British Labour movement), the Labour Party Annual Conference was nothing more than a second, and by no means improved edition, of the Trades Union Congress.

These trade union leaders (I use the word "leader" in its widest sense) until recent years exercised decisive influence on Labour Party policy, and even to-day dominate the party organisation. In temperament and homely way of life they are astonishingly like their German confrères. Both are *petit bourgeois* with a decided strain of proletarian "Babbittry." And if the main characteristic of the German trade union leader is a certain heaviness and tendency towards the easy-going, his British colleague is remarkable for his humour and *bonhomie*. Nevertheless there are certain differences in their intellectual outlook that are unmistakable. The German trade union leader as a rule has had a Marxist training. It is true that often his Marxism has become mere lip-service, but he has learned from it to think thoroughly and to see beyond the immediately practical in the problems that confront him. His British brother, whose mind is unburdened by theoretical conviction, has a far greater appreciation of immediate realities. Marxist training has given the German leader ability

to counteract in his union those medieval craft tendencies that have hampered the British trade union movement even to this day, and to approve rationalisation as an inevitable process in capitalist development at a time when to the Englishmen, with the exception of men like Citrine and Bevin, not only the concept but the process itself seemed more than suspicious.

One more factor must yet be mentioned which is perhaps the outcome of this difference in training, and which I, as a foreigner, approach with a certain distaste. The British trade union leader too often feels himself merely to be the delegate of his colleagues; the German is nearly always conscious of the fact that he is their representative. The British leader is too prone to be carried away by popular opinion, and to bow to the extremist storm of the day—a tradition that exercised its powers to the full in the fateful days that preceded the national strike of 1926 and made possible the declaration of the General Strike. The German leader dares to face the tide of temporary unpopularity. The German parliamentary republic would never have risen from the chaos of collapse had there not been dozens of trade union and workers' leaders willing to risk reputation, position, and the confidence of their men rather than lead whither they knew danger boded.

In view of this far-reaching unity of organisation and personalities, and the complete dependence of the Labour Party on the trade unions, the disparity in policy shown between the two bodies in the years 1924 to 1926 would appear to be quite incapable of explanation. On the one hand the trade unions were pursuing a policy of a united front with Russia that led almost to a split in the Amsterdam Trade Union International, while in the other camp the united front manœuvre met with utter refusal, a strong anti-Communist front was formed and loyal support given to the attitude of the Second International towards the Russians. On the one hand a militant policy that culminated in the General Strike; on the other a purely defensive policy, refusal of all extreme measures of socialisation, and the greatest possible concessions to national political traditions. Again, on the one hand belief in the imminent collapse of capitalism; on the other, confidence in the continuation of a parliamentary political system. In a word—on the one hand, defeat after defeat; on the other—victory in by-election after by-election.

The contradiction seems at first incapable of resolution, and as a fact the phenomenon would be incapable of explanation did the Labour Party represent in itself the same independent unity as does the trade union movement. But the state of

affairs in Great Britain is such that the party organisation does not represent the decisive factor in the parliamentary party. On the contrary, in practice the Parliamentary Labour Party controls the party organisation. The party is only sovereign during the period of dissolution between two Parliaments.

After an election the parliamentary party detaches itself from connection with the party organisation to an extent almost unthinkable from a Continental standpoint, and becomes an independent organism known characteristically as the Parliamentary Labour Party, which is not a function of the party nor its expression of political power, but a party in itself. Only thus is it possible that the chairman of the Labour Party, who is elected mechanically at the annual conference, plays, in comparison with the chairman of the parliamentary party, an almost purely decorative rôle, and is without any influence on political conduct unless his own parliamentary position lends him such influence and authority.

The party organisation becomes an auxiliary of the parliamentary party, and its principal task lies in putting material delivered by the latter to propaganda uses, supplying matter for use in the parliamentary fight, continual propaganda work in the " backward areas," and the preparation and financing of the next general election. Only in this manner can the political

parties in Great Britain function with a lack of inner " party-life " to an extent that appears completely inexplicable to the German Socialist. And even if the Labour Party in contradistinction to the Conservative and Liberal parties does possess some of its elements, none the less they are by no means in accord with our own Continental conceptions. An intensive political group-life is to be found solely in the Independent Labour Party. In comparison with the German Social Democratic Party, the Labour Party is still a mere voting machine. Only by a full appreciation of this fact can be understood the repeated diametrical divergence in policy between the political party and the trade union movement.

These differences in policy are now buried in the past; the trade unions have now, as a consequence of the defeat of 1926 and the abandonment of their Russian policy, adopted the same sober attitude that was forced upon the parliamentary party (and with it the Labour Party) by daily contact with the realities of political life. The political party and the trade unions are now united both ideologically and in matters of practical politics.

The National Joint Council, established earlier, of representatives of trade unions, the National Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party, which sits when any important decision is to be

taken, has become the outward sign of this inner unity.

ii: THE CRISIS IN THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

Considered historically, the I.L.P. has been the main fount of Socialist inspiration in the British Labour Party. It is true that before its formation both the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation had represented Socialist thought in Great Britain, but the Fabian Society was far removed from any idea of founding an independent Socialist movement, and the S.D.F., because of its Marxian associations, could work only within very narrow limits. With the birth of the I.L.P., which owes a deep spiritual debt to the Fabian Society, first effective contact was made with the trade unions, and the formation of a mass Socialist party made possible. From its very beginnings it set itself the task of weaning the great industrial organisations from their numerous political associations with the two bourgeois parties and of teaching them a self-dependence of thought and independence of political attitude that would lead finally to a political labour movement. It was due to its propaganda that the Trades Union Congress of 1899 called into being the " Labour Representation Committee " and laid

the first foundations of an independent workers' movement in modern politics. The I.L.P. can thus be regarded as the mother of the Labour Party, and its permeation with Socialist thought has always remained its primary aim.

With the year 1918 two movements in the course of the development of the Labour Party led to an objective change in the situation of the I.L.P. towards the Labour Party. The first, an organisational factor, lay in the introduction of the principle of individual membership, thus making adherence to the party open to those outside the scope of trade union organisation. The second, psychological, lay in the definite adoption of Socialism as the economic and political basis of its policy.

With this change in the party statutes the former monopoly of the Socialist bodies within the party was broken and a main task of the I.L.P. brought to fruition. Henceforward of all its aims there remained solely its work of propaganda.

Thus, in 1918, the elements of the crisis within the I.L.P. itself and the crisis between the same body and the Labour Party had been created. External considerations prevented a clear recognition of this fact for a number of years, and the first open outbreak occurred eight years later. To-day, that the future of the I.L.P. is a problematical question is a

fact that cannot be denied even within the I.L.P. itself. It is a peculiar phenomenon that the introduction of individual membership of the Labour Party was not only not accompanied by a decrease in I.L.P. membership but came as a prelude to the sharpest upward curve that it had ever known. In the years following immediately upon the war the I.L.P. became a refuge for all those radical, bourgeois malcontents whose war experience and disillusion had brought them into contact with the Socialist movement, or those from the Universities who were seeking a way into the Labour movement and who sought a platform for the propagation of ideas of the most varied kinds. The party, which before the war had been a definite proletarian organisation in spite of an intellectual leadership, became overrun by ex-Liberals, young-men-just-down-from-Oxford guiltless of any Socialist tradition, ideologists and typical monomaniacs full of their own pet projects. This invasion diverted the old proletarian Socialism of the party into strange channels, and led it into the peculiar position it occupies among the parties that form the Socialist International, and which lately has on several occasions brought it to the verge of expulsion.

The old party tradition, however, proved itself strong enough to preserve a certain continuity. The

old leaders, among them Ramsay MacDonald, still sat or assisted in the proceedings of the National Executive and determined its official pronouncements.

These years were accompanied by a strange phenomenon, which deserves mention as an interesting contribution to political sociology: Although the I.L.P. had now fulfilled its historic mission, and as a consequence of the new invasion began to exhibit symptoms of severe internal disharmony, its political influence seemed to reach peak-point. Besides its own official I.L.P. nominees, its members formed the greater percentage of candidates in election after election, both among those put forward by the local Labour parties and among trade unions. In the Parliamentary party of 1923-4 they formed a strong majority among the Labour members, and in these circumstances it is scarcely to be wondered at that thirty per cent. of the MacDonald Cabinet held an I.L.P. ticket. But even at this time a new factor made its appearance which, had the new leaders of the I.L.P. the slightest consciousness of their geometrical position, must have given them furiously to think. In practice it proved that I.L.P. membership was always subservient to Labour Party allegiance whenever the two came into conflict. The influence of the I.L.P. on the Labour movement,

apart from one rather unfortunate episode, was in the main negative. True, it was only at a later period when the policy of the I.L.P. became ever more visibly divergent from that of the Labour Party that the true state of affairs was revealed, and then in a manner almost tragical, but even in the parliamentary period from 1924 to 1928 the fact emerged that in spite of the 114 I.L.P. members of the total 150 Socialist M.P.s, neither their votes nor influence were cast for I.L.P. issues. With the fall of the Labour Government the new tendency in the I.L.P. had won the upper hand. The old leaders did not vacate their ministerial posts to return to the I.L.P. Executive; allegiance to the I.L.P. had given way to a sense of obligation towards the Labour Party.

Further, the men who filled the ministerial posts in the Labour Government had undergone a psychological change which did not now dispose them favourably towards wild-cat I.L.P. schemes. The responsibilities of statesmanship proved stronger than the party politics. In many cases this new attitude expressed itself in almost exaggerated fear of being identified with Left Wing political sentiments of which but a few years before they had been the exponents, a fear which at times bordered on the ridiculous. It is true to say that, compared even with the Liberals, the leaders of the Labour Party were

far more restrained in their public utterances than is usual in the party forming His Majesty's Opposition.

New men, appointed often from the ranks of the rawest recruits, took over the posts of the old leaders. Adverse criticism of the Labour Government, and opposition to official Labour policy, was authorised and approved by the new executive. Step by step there was formed a kind of organised policy of the Left Wing, a policy destined to seek salvation somewhere between Communism and Reformism. Then Clifford Allen, who had skilfully steered the I.L.P. ship along its new routes without yet losing touch with the main body, was forced by ill-health to resign his command, and the 1926 Congress elected James Maxton, the leader of the Clyde Socialists, to be chairman. The Executive now fell victims to every improvised and hasty project which might impinge upon them with sufficient force from their own midst. Sentimental politics were given free rein and decisions determined by the agitational necessities of the moment. In startling succession the Executive identified itself with Arthur Ponsonby's bellicose anti-militarism, with Oswald Mosley's financial-political devices (now dropped in favour of the less exacting attractions of foreign policy), with H. N. Brailsford's "Socialism in our time" scheme which aims at transforming society

and industry by means of the living wage, with Fenner Brockway's attempts to reconcile and unify the Socialist and Communist Internationals, and with a purely Utopian colonial policy totally lacking in any and every prospect of success. Although in the past the lack of firm theoretical foundation had produced uncertainty in action, in this period the party's ideological confusion stood out in grotesque contrast to its hysterical demands for clear thinking. The force of tradition disappeared and the I.L.P., released from all restraints of political gravity, began to rocket aimlessly in space.

These symptoms are perhaps easier to diagnose than may appear at first view, and have their origin deep rooted in the urge towards self-preservation and self-expression of an organisation which, still feeling life stirring within it, cannot believe its historic mission is fulfilled. And even though an objective view must contemn this new policy as one based on self-deception, yet judged by the subjective standards of its exponents there can be no doubt as to the disinterestedness and honourable convictions that gave it birth. To understand how completely these events were conditioned by this psychological factor, it is necessary to delve back into the party's pre-war history. The I.L.P. came into the world as a pioneer, and its way ever led along paths untrodden

by the movement as a whole. Its relation to the Labour Party from the hour of foundation to the moment war was declared had always been that of the advance guard to an army. Experience taught it that both in thought and organisation it had always led from the party by a length, and it was a commonplace that what the I.L.P. thought to-day the Labour Party would resolve upon to-morrow. For years its extremism had by no means signified isolation, but was rather a clearing of the way for the more slowly moving body in its rear. It seemed as though some inevitable law of Socialist evolution were operating whose existence all facts tended to confirm. In these circumstances it is easy to understand how I.L.P. infallibility became an I.L.P. article of faith.

In August 1914 the operation of the law seemed to suspend activity when, in opposition to the Labour Party, the I.L.P. adopted an attitude of absolute condemnation towards the war, and in the years that followed was unsuccessful in winning the Labour Party over to its policy of uncompromising pacifism. But the years that followed upon the war brought their recompense by the recognition by the masses of the validity of a great many of its arguments against the Labour Party's enlistment into the ranks of national unity. The election of Ramsay MacDonald to the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party

and the rise of Philip Snowden, who had represented the pacifist policy of the I.L.P. during the war even more expressly than MacDonald, was the outward expression of this last great moral victory of the I.L.P.

It is thus understandable that even after the adoption of a Socialist goal by the Labour Party the new leaders still believed the old law which governed the relation between their own and the larger party would continue to operate as heretofore. The Socialist word accepted, they conceived it their I.L.P. duty to make the I.L.P. word flesh. The Socialism of the Labour Party was strongly influenced by the spirit of the old Fabian, Sidney Webb, who believed in the inevitability of gradualness in the realisation of the Socialist state; the I.L.P. pressed for its immediate realisation on the immediate capture of a clear parliamentary majority. Socialism, they proclaimed, is not enough. We want Socialism in our generation. We want Socialism to-morrow. The dynamic of this urgency was provided by the newcomers, who, with convert ardour, desired an immediate reaping of their spiritual sowing. These men it was who were vitally concerned in the new turn in I.L.P. policy. These men it was that an ironic fate brought into the fold at a moment when clarity of thought, vision, and knowledge of the

world it was aiming to rebuild were never so urgently needed.

The new crop of plans, projects, and theories, offered by the I.L.P. to the Labour Party in 1926 to 1928 in most alarming plenitude, met with no acceptance. The I.L.P. still believed itself the advance guard of the army, but soon it proved that the army was no longer following at their heels. The old law had ceased to function. Neither the I.L.P.'s financial-political plans, nor the measures of socialisation contained in Brailsford's " Socialism in our time," met with the approval of the trade union and Labour Party leaders. At this time it was almost tragic to see these proud picked troops of the British working-class tilting at windmills with all the energy, devotion, and enthusiasm of their days of glory—to see the Executive issuing manifesto after proclamation and proclamation after manifesto on colonial policy and foreign policy, none of which even the Socialist *Daily Herald*, to say nothing of the remainder of Fleet Street, printed in full. Of all this the masses had no inkling. They pursued their way untouched.

It is not too simple to find a completely adequate explanation of this sudden failure of I.L.P. infallibility. The fact that the financial-political plans and the measures for rapid socialisation were only half digested is only an aspect of the truth. Even if they

had been presented in impregnable completeness instead of as rickety skeletons riddled by criticism, they would have met the same fate. The reason of their ineffectiveness, and with it the collapse of the new I.L.P. policy, is to be found much deeper; the I.L.P. had set itself a goal which, by reason of its own laws, was unattainable. It was possible for a small propagandist organisation to be the leaven of Socialism within a great movement. It functioned within the limits of a mission whose success was dependent upon the willingness of the organised masses themselves to listen and accept the new gospel. The attempt on the part of the I.L.P. to take the task of realising Socialism into its own hands was doomed to failure by the very fact that the tempo and form of Socialist development are under the control of forces that cannot be held within the bounds of a small propagandist organisation. Its realisation must inevitably be the work of the mass party as a whole and not that of a body whose membership in its heydey has never been more than 50,000. Moreover, when the struggle for political power commences, success is dependent upon outside forces; the whole party must perforce decide not only the objective but the speed at which its millions can march forward towards it. At this period any organisation of such character as the

I.L.P. must cease to be the General Staff and relinquish its command in favour of the Party Executive and Parliamentary Committee. The old historic mission of the I.L.P. was fulfilled.

One sphere of activity there always remained for the I.L.P., but its exercise demanded a greater measure of modesty than the new leaders of the party had at their command. Although its former monopoly of the recruiting ground for individual members was broken, and its duties as advance-guard to the whole movement had become superfluous with the Labour Party's recognition of Socialism as its final goal, nevertheless the work of propaganda remained more urgent than ever before. The lack of any intensive local party life and the slender threads that bound trade unionists to the Labour Party tended to work against the formation of a strong individual Socialist consciousness and in a degree was most disquieting. How much this was the case is shown by the sympathetic fluctuations in Labour Party membership with that of the trade unions. That the Labour Party should gain and then mechanically lose a million of members is proof plain that only a tithe of these corporatively enrolled trade unionists considered their party membership as more than a mere attribute of their trade union membership. Recently this fact has emerged clearer

than ever. With the introduction of the principle of "contracting in," the party lost one and a half million members at one blow. And it is cold comfort that some 400,000 of these were "dead souls" of trade unionism, lapsed members whose levies the trade unions, out of a sense of self-respect and good-will towards the Labour Party, still paid. But in spite of all this the fact that the Labour Party could lose forty per cent. of its membership because of a mere formality is positive proof that none of these one and a half millions of party members were conscious of Socialism as a moral and economic duty.

This more modest task of Socialist propaganda within the Labour Party could only meet with success if the I.L.P. refrained from pursuit of Socialist ideals of its own and confined itself to the distribution of the small change of Socialist thought among the needy brethren. But instead of this the I.L.P. developed divergent doctrines of its own, and its propaganda—as far as it ever reached the masses—was, from the standpoint of the Labour Party, nothing more than an oppositional and even subversive activity. In this manner they found themselves in conflict with the party at every point, and instead of being a source of strength to the movement became finally a permanent factor of its weakness.

It is then not to be wondered at if the continued existence of the I.L.P. within the Labour Party for a number of years has been a point of discussion in the British Labour movement. The problem occupied the attention of the 1926 Liverpool Conference, and in the following year at Blackpool a resolution was moved which recommended that " in view of the final acceptance by the Labour Party of Socialism as its political and economic basis " the two organisations should be merged, i.e. that the I.L.P. should be dissolved. But neither at Liverpool nor at Blackpool was any definite attempt made to grasp this thorny problem. Later, the viewpoint represented by the Blackpool resolution received new and, politically considered, a far more significant impetus. Philip Snowden, one of its oldest leaders and one who in his own words " had devoted the best years of his political life" to the I.L.P., officially announced his resignation. His reasons for this step were published in a letter which gave thorough examination to the position of the I.L.P., and which stated that " the I.L.P. as a separate body has served its purpose, and its continued existence is neither necessary nor useful. The Labour Party, since it permitted individual membership and adopted a definite Socialist basis, adequately fulfils all the purposes for which the I.L.P. originally existed. The I.L.P. now

unnecessarily duplicates the work of the Labour Party and in doing so wastes money and effort which could be more usefully employed in the local Labour parties. The old I.L.P., by creating the Labour Party, has made a far greater and more powerful instrument for creating the Socialist state than it could ever hope to be, and it might well be content now to merge itself in the larger life. . . ."

This letter brought the crisis in the I.L.P. to a head and effected a further decrease in membership. Its position and importance received a blow from which it has never recovered. Until this time it had been the recruiting depot for the middle-classes, but in the twelve months that followed upon the publication of Snowden's letter it lost even this last function. The middle-class recruits of 1928 neglected to enlist at the I.L.P. depot. It is significant that Commander Kenworthy, for instance, one of the most prominent of the new-comers, joined the Labour Party direct. The year 1928 saw the I.L.P., in spite of its larger though decreasing membership and greater dynamic urge, sink to the same level as the amorphous Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society, whose one sign of life for many years seems to be an annual lecture by Mr. Bernard Shaw delivered in the Kingsway Hall. What remains of I.L.P. influence—greatest geographically in Scotland and politically in

the House of Commons—is a relic of its past. In these circumstances it is highly doubtful whether the attempts of Mr. Emmanuel Shinwell, and Mr. Charles Roden Buxton to lead it away from the wilderness and the lure of its fantastic mirages, and to consolidate it as the propaganda department of the Labour Party, can meet with success.

iii: THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE COMMUNISTS

The clear line that divides the Communist and Socialist movements was drawn later in Great Britain than in any other country in Central or Western Europe. The part that the Zinoviev letter played in the October elections of 1924 is only to be explained by the fact that at that time the political opponents of the Labour Party could seek with some slight justification to establish an identity between the Communist and Socialist movements in England.

The responsibility for the tardiness with which this clear differentiation was established is due to geographical, psychological, and organisational factors and considerations of foreign politics. As far as historical considerations are concerned it must be stated that to the vast majority of the members of the Labour Party the Communists repre-

sented nothing more than a repetition of former events. It must be borne in mind that the Labour Party had been brought to its ultimate confession of Socialist faith through the agitation of a small minority, and this seemed to have a parallel in the new Communist agitation. In their day Keir Hardie and his comrades had been branded as disruptive revolutionaries, and this memory proved for many of the Labour Party a stumbling-block in the way of any active move against the Communists in their ranks. But most probably, of all the above-mentioned factors, the chief cause was to be found in the organisational structure of the party as a federation of collective groups, each with its own constitution. As trade union members, Communists in England became automatically members of the Labour Party (unless they signed an express statement refusing payment of the annual threepenny political levy), and were able to gain uncontested entrance as trade unionists into delegate councils and as delegates to party congresses, where at first they were by no means received as strangers.

This commingling of Socialists and Communists was psychologically facilitated by that oldest of British political traditions which demands a certain extremism and violence in its congresses and public agitation, and allows even a meek and comfortable

Liberal at certain times to think it not beneath his dignity to thunder and tirade against the holiest props of empire, the fleet and foreign policy. It would seem that the British peoples prize most highly the politician, next to the vivaciously temperamental, who is endowed with rich gifts of exaggeration or who superbly rejoices in the superlative. And it would further seem that the organised workers have always had a tender but quite non-committal affection for the extremists in their midst, a phenomenon that comes to light at every party congress or meeting, as witness the attitude towards James Maxton, leader of the Left Wing opposition, at any annual conference.

There can be no doubt whatever that the mass of party members at first saw in the Communists nothing more dangerous than extreme enthusiasts for the common cause, and were utterly unaware of deeper or more radical differences. At the party congresses Communist speakers were greeted one and all with astonishing warmth, and the delegates listened to their disquisitions (sometimes really excellent in form, but utterly misleading) with deep interest and greeted the wind-up of the peroration with loud and prolonged applause—only to go and vote all their resolutions into a hopeless minority. To a Continental this attitude, maybe due to a

sense of sporting "fairness," is utterly incomprehensible.

The Communist Party of Great Britain is a child born of crisis. It rose on the 1st of August, 1920, as a kind of phœnix, from the ashes of the Shop Steward movement and the cinders of the British Socialist Party and obscure organisations such as the Socialist Labour Party and the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The young Communist Party was faced with a totally different situation from that of its sister parties on the Continent. In the place of a solid, firmly organised Social Democratic Party, it found a loose federation of parties. In place of a Labour movement, split to the roots by war and revolution, it found a united party, and one, moreover, because of the Churchill adventures, that was kindly disposed towards the Bolsheviks.

The way that the Communist Party of Great Britain was to pursue was plain to see. Not disruption but permeation was the obvious road to take. In its beginnings, then, it was not a body in opposition to the Labour Party, but an organisation created for its permeation with Bolshevik ideas. Its aim was not to crush but to conquer the Labour Party from within.

The theoretical foundations of this policy had been laid by no less a person than Lenin himself. In a long

dissertation, which by no means bears witness to Lenin's famed analytical intelligence, he drew up a thesis which runs somewhat as follows: The majority of the British undoubtedly support Henderson and Snowden, who are " worse social patriots than Scheidemann, Noske and other gentlemen of the same kidney." Propaganda alone will not seduce the British workers from allegiance to their leaders. Therefore they must be disillusioned by bitter personal experience of a Henderson-cum-Snowden government. This experience must make them fully conscious of the " treachery " of their leaders and either turn the majority towards Communism or at least neutralise them in their attitude. Objectively, too, it would create a revolutionary situation in which the Communists could seize the reins of leadership of the British working-class. Thus far Lenin; and it is easy now in retrospect to ridicule his false diagnosis to the full. Signs of genius are not altogether wanting in his realisation of and warning against the impossibility of a mechanical transference of Continental European Communist methods to English conditions and his policy of permeation of the political party, a policy which in actual practice was used in the trade union movement.

The general work of the Communists lay in obscuring their points of difference from the Socialists

and magnifying those things common to both movements. At that period their attention was devoted to " gingering-up " the Labour Party, and to manœuvring the " reformist " leaders into situations where their actions must of necessity conflict with their former utterances. In such situations they must either be driven to " extremism " or be " unmasked."

The Communists now attempted to place their members in all available key positions with the ultimate intention of transforming the Labour Party into a Communist Party without any change of name, and thus avoiding the weary, expensive, and prospectless work of building up a parallel independent organisation. It was fully in accord with this policy that on three occasions application was made by the Communist Party for affiliation to the Labour Party.

At the beginning of its work in England the Communist Party achieved a certain measure of success. It actually succeeded in placing its agents in positions of trust in the Labour Party, especially in the branches and Trades and Labour Councils, and in creating there an echo of its demands in a magnitude out of all proportion to its own size.

These partial successes were due to the fact that the Communist Party entered the field with a definite, well-established, and, at least theoretically,

well-thought-out plan with which to fight an amorphous mass. Economic materialism, with its theory of causal connection between the economic basis and the political, sociological, and cultural " superstructure "—the one vital spark that remains in the Marxian pyre—enabled the most intelligent among them to give a certain amount of explanatory significance to social and economic phenomena in contemporary England, and to fit them to some formula. Even the few non-Communist members of the Labour Party, such as Walton Newbold or Philips Price, who have had the benefit of a Marxist training, or such a man as John Strachey, the editor of the *Socialist Review*, who has initiated himself, not without difficulty, into the intricacies of Marxian theory, enjoy an advantage over their fellows that is brought clearly to view in their writings. It is not, then, surprising that in these circumstances the Communists were able to make some impression on the British Labour movement.

In the meantime—this during the years 1922-3—a realisation of the essential differences of the two movements began to take root in the heads of the Labour Party leaders. This process was aided to a certain extent by the publications and reports of the Second International, which enabled the British leaders to watch the development of Communist

strategy at home in connection with its operations abroad. The masses saw the light later. Their trade union leaders, unlike those of the political movement, were still in the thrall of their *idée fixe*—Anglo-Russian trade union unity.

A struggle between Communists and Socialists now began to rage in the trade union congresses and party conferences. It aroused more excitement among the massesof Continental workers than among the Englishmen themselves, who, being instinctively anti-Communist, smiled in the consciousness of ultimate victory at the fears of their Continental friends.

Up to the time of the Annual Conference held in London (7th to 10th October, 1924) Communists still had the statutory right of unquestioned admission to Labour Party membership, in addition to the right of participation as delegates and the privilege of election to the Executive. This conference was the first to mark the division clearly and unmistakably. Communist orators at the conference still strove to explain that their policy was by no means aimed at the destruction of the Labour Party, but on the contrary was directed towards an "earnest, loyal and honourable " support of the Party.

In spite of this assurance the conference moved and accepted three resolutions which still serve as the basic principles of Labour's attitude towards the

Communists. The first resolution refused Communist Party affiliation by 3,185,000 against 193,000 votes. The second moved that no member of the Communist Party could be officially endorsed as a Labour Party candidate for the House of Commons, and was carried by 2,456,000 votes against 654,000. The third resolution ran that " no member of the Communist Party be accepted as a member of the Labour Party," and it is significant of the feeling of the party on this point that it was carried only by the barest of majorities—1,804,000 against 1,540,000. But even these resolutions, in view of the autonomy of the unions within the party, still left many loopholes by which Communists could gain entrance as delegates to the party conferences. True, the Communist request for party affiliation had been refused, Communist parliamentary candidates denied recognition, and individual membership of Communists in the Labour Party made impossible. Nevertheless the technical possibility of any Communist, were he a trade union member with his political levy fully paid, being sent as delegate to a party conference without any question as to the validity of his mandate remained unchanged. This problem occupied the attention of the next Liverpool conference in the shape of an Executive resolution which ran:

" The National Executive also desires to in-

timate to the Conference that in its opinion affiliated trade unions can only act consistently with the decisions of the Annual Conference in its relation to the Communists by appealing to their members when electing delegates to national or local Labour Party conferences or meetings to refrain from nominating or electing known members of non-affiliated political parties, including the Communists."

In this form the decision of the London conference was carried in Liverpool by the overwhelming majority of 2,962,000 to 48,000 votes.

The conference held in Birmingham in 1928 was the first to try to block these loopholes and carried a resolution moved by the Executive (the so-called " declaration of loyalty "), which aimed at dealing a final blow to all Communist activity within the Labour Party. Among other clauses this extensive declaration contained the following:

(1) Affiliation to the Labour Party implies general loyalty to the decisions of the party conference and debars affiliated organisations promoting candidates for public authorities in opposition to those of the Labour Party.
(2) The following persons are ineligible as delegates to any party conference:
    (*a*) Candidates in opposition to duly endorsed Labour candidates;
    (*b*) Members of political parties ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party.

(3) Only those prepared to advocate the policy and principles of the Labour Party should be engaged as speakers at public meetings by constituency parties.

From the viewpoint of the Communist Party the decision of the Birmingham conference marked a new stage in its relation to the Socialist movement in Great Britain. Its original aim of conquest of the Labour Party from within remained unchanged, but its achievement met with ever-increasing difficulties. At this point Communist activity within such ostensibly neutral bodies as the " Left Wing organisation " reached high-water mark. Simultaneously every endeavour was made systematically to place Communist agents, either officially or otherwise members of the Communist Party, in responsible political positions as secretaries of local trade unions and as independent working-class candidates for seats on public administrative bodies. Roundabout admittance to the Labour Party Conference was sought by means of those trade unions, such as the Garment Workers' Union with its constantly fluctuating membership, most prone to extremist influence.

Regarded from an æsthetic standpoint, the spectacle was extremely fascinating, and it must be admitted that Communist leaders such as Harry Pollitt, a highly gifted man who towers head and

shoulders above the average trade-union leader, pulled the strings with superb adroitness. This was the more astonishing as the British Labour movement has passed through no such period of "illegality" as has been the fate of the Russian and German Socialist movement and thus is lacking in any tradition of underground activity. On the other hand the brilliant efficiency of the British Secret Service is a proof that the gift for underground work is not wholly alien to the British character.

The year 1926 was one of foreboding for Communism in Great Britain, and with the coming of the General Strike, that greatest tactical error of the British Labour movement of the last few decades, its final knell was sounded. They found themselves, quite involuntarily, in that same semi-revolutionary situation that Lenin had desired, presenting an unprecedented possibility for assuming the leadership of the masses. But the striking workers never once engaged in bloody conflict with the police—they played football with them. The old formulæ refused unaccountably to function. And strive as the Communists might to blow upon the flames, and strive as they might to kindle them anew through sporadic outbreaks after the collapse of the general movement, still the masses remained loyal to their old leaders, whose handling of the strike, it

must be stated, belongs to one of the darkest chapters of trade union history. The months that followed showed clearly enough that the British Labour movement was not about to enter into a period of severe struggle and increasing militancy, but into one of more sober endeavour than ever before. The collapse of the strike brought with it no guerilla warfare of the classes, but joint conferences of employers and employed—the Mond-Turner conferences.

The beginning of the year 1927 revealed clear evidence of the bankruptcy of the former Communist tactics in Great Britain, and Moscow decided on a sudden change in its English policy. Until this time the Communist Party had maintained the fiction of accord with the Labour Party, and with few exceptions had avoided pitting its own candidates against those of Labour. Now it entered the field officially as an organisation opposed and inimical to the Labour Party. It is highly significant that the decision taken by the plenum of the Executive Committee of the Third International on the new orientation of Communist policy in Great Britain was expressly opposed by the "English Committee." And perhaps also that the same committee ultimately voted together with the other members of the Comintern for the acceptance of the thesis of the International.

The original proposals of the English Communists were very sensibly to the effect that Communist candidates should only be put into the field in those constituencies where there was already an established Communist candidature, where the local Labour Party had been disaffiliated by the Labour Party Executive, or where a Communist candidature would not lead to Liberal or Conservative victory at the polls.

The instructions issued by the Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the British Party state that the—

> " experience of the MacDonald Government, the betrayal of the General Strike and the miners' fight, the changed attitude of the Labour Party and trade union leaders towards the question of war and relations with the U.S.S.R., China, India and Egypt, their changed attitude on the principal domestic questions (Nationalisation, the anti-Trade Union Bill, industrial peace), all this renders it necessary for the British Communist Party to come out more boldly and more clearly as an independent political party, to change its attitude towards the Labour Party and the Labour Government, and consequently to replace the slogan of the Labour Government by the slogan of the Revolutionary Workers' Government."

Further, " the Communist Party will put forward the largest possible number of its own candidates "; and " it is absolutely necessary to put up candidates

against the leaders of the Labour Party and the General Council."

The most destructive criticism of the new English policy of the Comintern was made by the British Communists themselves, this admittedly before the Comintern gave its final decision. The English representatives of Moscow stated in their official report that any such increase in candidates would not help the party to gain any independent ascendency over the masses—

> "To come out and oppose Labour candidates . . . will only have for its result the creation of an unnecessary barrier between the party and the mass of workers standing behind the Labour Party whom it is our duty to win for Communism. It is not a tactic calculated to strengthen the Communist Party against the reformists, but on the contrary a tactic calculated to strengthen the reformist leaders against the Communist Party. . . . To contest the seats of reactionary leaders, without having won the local workers to our support would not only result in the crushing defeat of the party but would consolidate the rank and file workers (who are growing increasingly critical of the bureaucracy) against us throughout the country, and ensure the complete defeat of those party candidates who are running under more favourable conditions elsewhere."

Taking into account the psychology of the average British elector, a further weighty argument could be

added. To judge from the fate of the Liberal Party, the British voter, apart from his personal sympathies and antipathies, has little time to spare for lost causes, and this factor more than loyalty towards old leaders is the one that may reduce the Communist vote at the coming elections under the actual figure of Communist sympathisers.

It is however possible, in view of the peculiar electoral system of Great Britain, that the intervention of a Communist candidate may result in the loss of a few hundred votes, and here and there the defeat of an official Labour Party candidate and the return of a Liberal or Conservative. But without belittling the moral effect that the defeat of a Labour Party or General Council leader may have, it can yet be stated that the proposed Communist candidature in twenty to fifty constituencies has caused satisfaction rather than discomfiture in the Labour Party headquarters. Once and for all it will make clear to the politically uneducated among the electorate the complete and fundamental independence of the two movements, and render a repetition of the panic that followed on the publication of the Zinoviev letter an impossibility for all time.

Nearly a year passed before the radical change in Communist strategy in England was laid before a conference of the British Communist Party. This

conference, at which every delegate represented some fifteen organised party members, took place in January 1929 and expressed its complete approval of the new Moscow policy. They interpreted the pronunciamento with logical sectarian fury and voted for the complete liquidation of the " Left Wing Organisation," that once noisy instrument of their permeation policy and cause of much perturbation of spirit in the Labour Party camp.

At first glance this decision would seem utterly inexplicable. Its cause lies in the fact that in the intervening twelve months a mass desertion from the Communist Party ranks had taken place. In 1921 the party boasted 10,000 members, and after heavy defections again reached the same figure in 1926. The new policy cost it half its membership. To-day, with its 3,500 adherents, it is again the sect it was at birth. The majority of its outstanding personalities, such as Walton Newbold and Raymond Postgate, have left its ranks, unable to endure its spirit and tactics.

Considered fundamentally, both Lenin's policy of " unmasking " the leaders and the new Communist policy of pursuing an independent extremist policy arose from the same false premise that there exists some latent friction between a reactionary leadership, upholding its ascendency and controlling the party

machinery by foul stratagem, and a working-class feeling itself at least potentially revolutionary. This presumable contradiction between a " hypocritical, treacherous and revisionist leadership " and the heroic, militant, proudly class-conscious masses is at variance with all known facts. Neither extensive unemployment nor the defeat of the General Strike has served to revolutionise the British working-class nor to fire it to aggression. On the contrary the last year or so after the extremist period has called forth a decided soberness of thought and deed, by no means, however, the result of any suppression. It is rather the expression of the consciousness of its own limitations, and that its extremism in the years 1922 to 1924 was born of no authentic impulse.

In these circumstances there can be no friction between masses and leaders, and they prove once again, as a hundred times before in the history of the British working-class, that the concept of revolutionary masses and reformist leaders is for normal times one of the greatest errors into which sociological judgment of the class-war in the period of finance-capital can fall. In reality, conditions in Great Britain are such that owing to federal organisation in which " members with passive consent are affiliated in blocks of hundreds of thousands at a time," and are lost in the same measure, leaders are

traditionally if not more " extreme " yet more constant and conscious in their efforts to achieve change in the social order than the workers themselves. It can be stated with all certainty that apart from sporadic outbursts of class passion (May 1926), apart from certain groups (the Garment Workers' Union) and certain geographical areas (the Clyde), for Great Britain and the twentieth century the fact remains true that the majority of organised workers in the party and unions stand not to the left but to the right of their leaders, and this despite any Communist thesis. The leaders, at least in their majority, are Socialist. The masses are still under the sway of traditional ideas.

By the beginning of 1929 the Communist Party of Great Britain had ceased to be a serious factor or even a problem within the British Labour movement.

A second Zinoviev letter will meet the fate it deserves.

Chapter II

AIMS AND OBJECTS

i: FOUNDATIONS AND HISTORY

IT is highly characteristic of the spirit that animates the British Labour Party that it should be a force in public life for nearly twenty years, reach a million membership and become the third greatest party in the House of Commons, and have been represented by its leading figures in a Coalition Government, before it felt the need for a definite statement of its aims and objects. In contrast to the Continental parties, whose every stage of development was accompanied by a corresponding programme, the British Labour party from its hour of birth to the last years of the war had been quite content with the annual resolutions of the party conference. These represented individual and peculiar demands (for the most part peculiar), but no attempt was ever made to order and unify this mosaic of principles and demands within the compass of a party programme. And when in June 1918 one was finally formulated and given to the world under the title " Labour and the New Social Order," the circumstances of its birth were so

extraordinary that its every feature bore their trace.

The cause of this delay, astounding to the Continental, are many and varied. It is partly to be traced in national tradition, which the British Labour movement as an integral part of the British nation has not failed to inherit, and partly in the party's organisation itself. It is not my intention or purpose here to enter into any deep analysis of the manifold cultural, economic, and spiritual factors of national tradition that have determined the spiritual outlook of British labour. But it can be definitely stated that this " programme-phobia " has a general cause in that same mistrust of theory and systematic thought which can be observed everywhere in English life and history. In England the umbilica between science and the realities of life has ever been frailer, incomparably frailer, than on the Continent and even in the U.S.A.; in England the empiric, the experimental, the improvisational has always been the deciding factor in political life.

The special causes can be found with all ease in the party's own history and organisation. Without denying its idealist impetus, nevertheless the Labour Party came into being for practical purposes as a " vital necessity if we wish Parliament to register faithfully the effect of the industrial revolution on

our social life," a phrase which I take from Mr. J. O'Grady's presidential address to the 1892 Trades Union Congress. Its original aim, as the title " Labour Representation Committee " implies, was the independent representation of working-class interests in Parliament. Socialist thought was only in evidence by the presence of those passionate enthusiasts who realised that old traditions must die hard before Socialism could be born. And their presence and influence were sufficient to convince the unions of the necessity of creating their own independent parliamentary representation even though it lacked Socialist character and outlook. The Socialists were still in a hopeless minority. From the foundation of the party, trade unionists, admitted to corporative membership by a majority decision of their particular union, have always formed ninety per cent of the rank and file.

In its first year of existence (1900) the party had a membership of 375,931; of these 353,070 were trade unionists and a mere 22,861 adherents of the three affiliated Socialist bodies, the I.L.P., the S.D.F., and the Fabian Society. This bare eight per cent represented all that was consciously Socialist in the new organisation.

It is evident that conditions favourable for a clear and definite statement of aims and objects were not

yet at hand. The union leaders and their men were still in the firm sway of old political ideas and prejudices. Many among them were still at heart Liberal or Conservative. They had only given their consent to the formation of the new party because they perceived in it a more effective method of representing working-class social and industrial interests in the Commons than through the agency of the older parties. Of the fundamental difference between the two they were not in the least aware.

This politically amorphous majority permanently confronted the Socialist bodies. Again, the three Socialist bodies in turn represented three divergent forms of Socialist thought. The S.D.F., the oldest among them, drew its inspiration from Karl Marx and aspired to a party similar to that of the German Social Democrats. The Fabian Society was anti-Marxist, opposed to any dogma, repelled by the class-struggle theory and pledged to the "inevitability of gradualness." The I.L.P., forswearing revolution, refused the Liberal co-operation dear to the Fabian heart, and sought to steer an individual middle course and attract the masses by the fervent emotion and sentiment of its Socialism. It is no secret that any attempt to unite the three on even a programme of minimum demands was hopeless; how much more hopeless, then, to attempt to give the

new " alliance between trade unions and Socialists " definite form by means of a Socialist programme of action!

This same impossibility continued until nearly twenty years had passed. The " Alliance," and therefore independent political action, were only rendered possible by the very fact that no statement of aims and objects was ever made; any attempt to go further in that direction must inevitably have led to the destruction of the " Alliance." The situation was uttely different from that obtaining on the Continent. While on the Continent small proletarian bodies, owing to the compactness of their system built up on theory and dogma, were able to create mass organisation, in England the mass organisation came into being before the theory. On the Continent strength of organisation and effective agitation both demanded a unified programme. In Great Britain it was the very vagueness of Labour Party aims that in the next twenty years attracted union after union into its ranks. Only after conflict after conflict between the opposing forces within itself and after hundreds of individual resolutions and decisions did the Labour Party awake to consciousness of its historic mission. Not until 1918 did the Labour Party evolve from social reform to Socialism. Alone among the parties in Europe it has remained per-

manently spared the contradiction between revolutionary faith and the day-by-day adaptations of policy to reality.

ii: THE PROGRAMME OF RECONSTRUCTION

The period towards the end of the war saw the need for change in both organisation and outlook borne ever more forcibly upon the Labour Party, compelling it to adapt itself to the changes of the past fifteen years and thus prepare the way to a post-war rise to power. It was imperative to find new ways and means of strengthening its appeal to the masses and maintaining and increasing the power which abnormal wartime conditions had lent it. Thanks to the propaganda of the I.L.P., the party was already Socialist before the war, at least so far as its most active workers were concerned. The war, which perforce introduced state control of industry and had given a fleeting glimpse of its illimitable possibilities, brought new impulse and adherents to Socialist thought. The time was ripe officially to determine and declare the Socialist character of the party. What in its beginnings would have been the greatest hindrance in its development became now its greatest attraction. Further, the logical conclusions of this step had to be drawn and party

membership opened to all those workers by brain whose professions excluded them from trade union membership. Formerly the I.L.P. had a practical monopoly of workers within this category, but the extreme wartime pacifism of the I.L.P. made it desirable that this monopoly should be broken and direct approach to the Labour Party be given those who disapproved of the I.L.P. attitude.

These desires and demands found both fulfilment and frustration in the party resolution of February 1918. This statute, which even to-day enjoys authority, represents one of the important stages in the development of the British Labour movement and, therefore, of the world Labour movement. It characterised the Labour Party finally as an organisation founded on a definite Socialist, political, and economic basis, and introduced the principle of individual membership.

The political and economic clauses of the party statutes are important in any attempt to form an estimate of the party's spiritual outlook, and form a permanent background and jumping-off place for all the demands contained in the " Labour and the New Social Order " programme of action and the Birmingham programme, " Labour and the Nation," of 1928.

The party statutes lay down Labour Party aims as

far as their political and economic aspect are concerned as follows:

> " To secure for the producers by hand or brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service.
>
> " Generally to promote the political, social and economic emancipation of the people, and more particularly of those who depend directly upon their own exertions by hand or brain for the means of life."

The most fleeting glance is sufficient to show that these fundamental demands contain little suspicion of any theoretical basis and no attempt is made to co-ordinate the achievement of party aims with the tendencies implicit in the ruling social and economic order. Nor is there any attempt made definitely to identify the struggle for their attainment as the class-struggle.

The first party programme discussed at the Labour Party Conference of 1918 and published later in revised form under the title " Labour and the New Social Order: A Report on Reconstruction," goes a good step further.

This document, compiled during the war, met the

wishes of hundreds of thousands who saw in the war not only the elements of carnage and destruction, but also the possibilities of reconstruction. " Labour and the New Social Order," as any examination of the Labour Party at that time tends to prove, brought large numbers of men and women into its ranks whose nearest and dearest wish was to see " a better England emerge from the war."

More than any other single publication since Henry George's " Progress and Poverty," or Morris's " News from Nowhere," it has profoundly influenced the Labour movement. On the Continent it has received neither the attention nor the appreciation it deserves. It was published during a period of mental and spiritual blockade when the international communications of Labour were either loose or altogether severed. And later in the years that followed on the war the various individual parties were too much concerned with their own immediate affairs and conquest of their own difficulties to spare time and trouble on those of their fellows abroad.

This reconstruction programme of 1918 begins with the assertion that the practical proposals of the Labour Party are firmly founded on principle. It does not see a complete collapse of European civilisation resulting from the world cataclysm, but

" the culmination and collapse of a distinctive industrial civilisation, which the workers will not seek to reconstruct." The war is destroying the social order of which it was born.

> " The individualist system of capitalist production . . . with its reckless profiteering and wage slavery, with its glorification of the unhampered struggle for the means of life and its hypocritical defence of the ' survival of the fittest,' with the monstrous inequality of circumstances which it produces, and the degradation and brutalisation, both moral and spiritual, resulting therefrom, may, we hope, indeed have received a death blow. With it must go the political system and ideas in which it naturally found expression. We of the Labour Party, whether in opposition or called upon in due time to form an administration, will certainly lend no hand to its revival. On the contrary, we shall do our utmost to see that it is buried with the millions it has done to death. . . .
>
> " What we now promulgate as our policy, whether for opposition or for office, is not merely this or that specific reform but a deliberately thought-out, systematic, and comprehensive plan for that immediate social rebuilding which any Ministry, whether or not it desires to grapple with the problem, will be driven to undertake."

The pamphlet, twenty-three pages of small print, developes in detail four main points, of which a highly condensed version is here given:

(1) *Universal Enforcement of the National Minimum*

" The first principle of the Labour Party is . . . the securing to every member of the community of all the requisites of healthy life and worthy citizenship. This is in no sense a ' class ' proposal. . . . It will be the guiding principle of any Labour Government.

" It is the duty of the Government to adopt a policy of systematically and deliberately preventing the occurrence of unemployment, instead of, as heretofore, letting unemployment occur and then seeking vainly and expensively to relieve the unemployed. It is now known that the Government can, if it chooses, arrange the orders of public works and the orders of National Departments and Local Authorities in such a way as to maintain the aggregate demand for labour in the whole kingdom (including that of capitalist employers) approximately at a uniform level from year to year; and it is therefore a primary obligation of the Government to prevent any considerable or widespread fluctuations in the total numbers employed in times of good or bad trade."

The detailed suggestions proffered for the forthcoming demobilisation (and which occupy a big place in the programme) are here omitted.

(2) *Democratic Control of Industry*

" What marks off this party most distinctively from any other of the political parties is its demand

for the full and genuine adoption of the principle of Democracy. . . .

" . . . But unlike the Conservative or Liberal parties, the Labour Party insists on Democracy in industry as well as in government."

In addition to demands for Adult Suffrage and Home Rule for Ireland (which have in the meantime been satisfied), the main individual points put forward are the following:

(*a*) Full civic rights for soldiers, sailors, and airmen. Passive electoral rights for Civil Servants. Proportional representation of parliamentary minorities. Shorter Parliaments. Complete abolition of the House of Lords. Strenuous opposition to any revision of the Second Chamber.

Separate statutory legislative assemblies for England, Scotland, and Wales.

Formation of a Cabinet for Commonwealth affairs for the Britannic Commonwealth formed of the British Ministry and Ministers of the Dominions and India.

(*b*) Immediate nationalisation of railways, mines, and electrical power-production.

Nationalisation of life insurance.

Temperance reform through State control, local option, and reduction of licences.

(*c*) Complete reorganisation of education.

(*d*) State control of agriculture. Agrarian reform. Co-operative distribution of foodstuffs.

(3) *A Revolution in National Finance*

" The Labour Party stands for such a system of taxation as will yield all the necessary revenue to the Government without encroaching on the prescribed National Minimum Standard of Life of any family whatsoever; without hampering production or discouraging any useful personal effort and with the nearest possible approximation to equality of sacrifice. We definitely repudiate all proposals for a protective tariff in whatever specious guise they may be cloaked. We shall strenuously oppose any taxation of whatever kind which would increase the price of food or any other necessary of life. . . .

" We hold that indirect taxation on commodities, whether by Customs or Excise, should be strictly limited to luxuries; and concentrated principally on those of which it is socially desirable that the consumption should be actually discouraged."

The following points are given detailed attention:

" Reform of the incidence, assessment, and collection of Income Tax and Super-Tax.

" Direct Taxation of Land Values.

" Regraduation and increase of Death Duties.

" Capital Levy for the partial liquidation of the National Debt."

(4) *The Surplus for the Common Good*

" In the disposal of the Surplus above the standard of life society has hitherto gone as far

wrong as in its neglect to secure the necessary basis of any genuine industrial efficiency or decent social order. . . .

" One main pillar of the house that Labour intends to build is the future appropriation of the Surplus . . . to the common good. . . . It is from this constantly rising Surplus (to be secured on the one hand by nationalisation and on the other by the steeply graduated taxation of private income and riches) that will have to be found the new capital which the community day by day needs for the perpetual improvement and increase of its various enterprises, for which we shall decline to be dependent on the usury-exacting financiers. . . .

" It is from the same source that has to be defrayed the public provision for the sick and infirm of all kinds, for the aged and those prematurely incapacitated by accident or disease. . . .

" From the same source must come the greatly increased public provision that the Labour Party will insist on being made for scientific investigation and original research in every branch of knowledge, not to say also for the promotion of music, literature and fine art, which have been under Capitalism so greatly neglected. . . . Society, like the individual, does not live by bread alone. . . ."

So much for domestic policy. The policy of Empire is laid down in the words:—

" We repudiate, on the one hand, the Imperialism that seeks to dominate other races or to impose

> our will on other parts of the British Empire, and disclaim equally any conception of a selfish and insular 'non-interventionism,' unregarding of our special obligations to our fellow citizens overseas; of the corporate duties of one nation to another; of the moral claims upon us of the non-adult races, and of our own indebtedness to the world of which we are a part."

It is not to be expected of a programme formulated during a world war, into which a national government had flung its full strength, that any far-reaching demands would be made in the province of external affairs. The clauses relating to foreign policy are of course tinged by the party's participation in the War Cabinet, although naturally there is no trace of any Chauvinism. The programme declares itself opposed to economic wars, secret diplomacy, and the formation of alliances. It demands, remarkably enough, "as part of the peace treaty," the formation of an all-embracing League of Nations with an International High Court, an International Legislature to enact an International Common Law and an International Council of Mediation to settle all such disputes as are not justifiable.

The programme—every sentence of which betrays the hand of Sidney Webb—represents the nearest approach to a theoretical formulation of principle known in the whole previous history of the Labour

Party. The S.D.F., the I.L.P., and the Fabian Society had one and all, each according to temperament and inclination, given a more or less theoretical expression to their demands in countless theses, manifestos, pamphlets and programmes. But the party as a whole had never before shown the slightest inclination to come into the open with demands founded on principle. "Labour and the New Social Order" was its first hazard.

The old inborn shyness was only overcome by the force of circumstances both extraordinary and contradictory—and the result proved itself both missile and boomerang. In a world of drowning men clutching for straws, the programme was not without its effect, but as an example of theoretical insight and knowledge it remains—with all due deference and reverence for Sidney Webb—far inferior to the most elementary of Continental Socialist programmes. One has but to read Karl Marx's masterly and devastating criticism of the 1875 Gotha Programme to realise how he would have fallen upon and rent this first programme of British Labour. Let us be content with this: the lack of any sound theoretical basis proved fatal in the analysis of current events; it prevented the compiler, and with him the whole party, from realising the world war as a phenomenon inherent in the prevailing economic order,

and from forming any true estimate of the strength of the forces making for the restoration of the old forms of industrial organisation. To this habitual failure to perceive individual economic phenomena in relation to tendencies inherent in the whole economic order is due the glaringly false diagnosis of the pseudo-Socialistic measures of war-time economy, only too evident in the passages quoted above. Only by reason of this failure was it possible that the Labour Party could cherish the hope that the world war had dealt capitalism a death blow, and state with confidence that each Government, presumably therefore Liberal as well as Conservative, must, willy-nilly, have recourse to Socialist measures of reconstruction.

Here speaks the voice of the old Fabian. Its tones, too, are heard in the clauses dealing with the solution of unemployment by administrative measures. The class struggle is set aside in favour of " permeation." " Labour and the New Social Order " is the offspring of Fabian thought—the first (and presumably the last) decisively to influence Labour Party policy.

Although the programme reveals more mercilessly than any other the limitations of Fabian thought, yet on the practical side it bears clear evidence of the triumph of that genius for grasping immediate realities that has ever distinguished the British

Labour movement and has lent it such formidable aid in its rise to power. The statements of principle have to-day only a certain historical value as representing its outlook in a former stage of development; but the practical demands, so far as they are yet unappeased, hold as good to-day as in 1918. The 1928 programme took over the demands of 1918 practically *en bloc;* and where this is not the case it is not always to the advantage of the new programme. Despite the lack of a firm theoretical basis, which would have enabled the changing world of events to be regarded from a stable theoretical standpoint, the Birmingham Programme is in direct descent from that of 1918.

If the two programmes are here given greater attention than their immediate significance in the realities of Labour Party politics would seem to warrant, it is because in them the spirit and aims of the party find their truest mirror and are nowhere else expressed with such authority. And this all the more because the astounding freedom of speech and thought which obtains in the party makes it far more difficult to differentiate between official and personal statements than on the Continent. Even among the leaders it is not always easy to distinguish when they are speaking *ex cathedra* and in the name of the party or in a purely private and personal capacity. From

any absolute standpoint, the significance of a party programme for the Labour Party is incomparably less than for the Continental parties.

iii: THE NEW PARTY PROGRAMME

After the foregoing it is scarcely surprising that ten years after the publication of " Labour and the New Social Order " it was not by any means a desire for theoretical clarity that urged the 1927 Blackpool Conference to commission a new party programme from the party executive. The step was dictated by practical and immediate political requirements. This fact is implicit in the wording of the resolution:

> " This Conference, in view of the forthcoming General Election and the need for defining the principal issues on which the electors will be asked to decide, instructs the National Executive, in consultation with the Parliamentary Labour Party, to prepare a statement for submission to the next annual or, if practicable, a special conference, setting forth the broad proposals which have from time to time been approved by the Party Conference and which would constitute a Programme of Legislation and Administrative Action for a Labour Government."

The practical aspect of this statement of the necessity for a new programme was especially stressed by the General Secretary of the party, Arthur Hen-

derson. Formerly, he stated, the Executive met on the dissolution of Parliament and issued an election manifesto. At a time when the Labour Party contested five hundred to six hundred seats the old procedure had become a technical impossibility. A second and more powerful argument in favour of an official party programme Henderson found in the existence of unauthorised programmes put forward by individual groups and persons which had given rise to disquieting confusion as to the party's true aims and objects.

If the decision of the Blackpool Conference is read in conjunction with statements by Henderson, Ramsay MacDonald and other leaders, it will be clearly understood that a programme in the Continental sense was neither possible nor desirable. What was aimed at, apparently, was that the new document should cover:

(*a*) Statement of aims and objects in accordance with former conference decisions. Creation of an official and authoritative basis for agitation and defence against rival attacks.

(*b*) Rules for guidance of parliamentary activity.

(*c*) Catalogue of future legislative and administrative measures to be effected by a future Labour Government or Governments.

The programme committee were faced by a practically impossible task. The slightest reflection sufficed to show that a manifesto cannot be a legislative programme, nor a statement of aims and objects a guidance for daily parliamentary activity, even in a party which desired with never such ardour clarity as to the difference between seeming and reality. It is, generally speaking, one of the chief characteristics of the Labour parties of all countries that they endeavour to overcome in themselves any tendency to "two-faced" morality such as is found among the bourgeois parties. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the ultimate document turned out something other than its original sponsors in Blackpool foresaw. Faced by the choice of placing greater emphasis upon the formulation of a legislative programme in the widest sense of the word, as the original resolution seemed to desire, or of examining and co-ordinating the whole body of party demands, it chose the latter. As was to be expected, this unavoidable discrepancy between mandate and result gave rise to lively controversy at the Birmingham Conference (1928), before which the programme was laid for acceptance or rejection. Not a little of the confusion was due to a lack of clearness as to what constitutes a programme; among the critics the opinion seemed to prevail that a party programme

is or should be identical with a legislative programme, and that the vague and indefinite form of the programme issued under the title " Labour and the Nation " represented an irresponsible decision of the party organisation which debars the Party of further influence on the legislative programme of any future Labour Government.

This method of reasoning found particularly drastic expression in a speech delivered by the Left Wing leader, James Maxton. If the draft programme were accepted, he argued, the Conference was giving the next Labour Government a free hand. " You lay down this thesis, the Executive reduces it to an election programme, your Labour Cabinet waters it down to a King's Speech. It (the Labour Cabinet) is going to become a King's Cabinet, and after it becomes a King's Cabinet it has an entirely new relationship to the parliamentary party, to this Conference and to the Labour movement."

The conference was convinced neither by the reminder of its own previous decision nor by Maxton's shrill warning. It agreed with Herbert Morrison, who pointed out that in any case it was impossible to foresee the result of the next election, and that even were a Labour majority returned, economic, psychological and social factors, all impossible to calculate in advance, must of necessity determine the next

step of any Labour Government. The Conference refused an adverse vote on the construction of the programme and limited itself to a criticism of detail and a few recommendations.

" Labour and the Nation " is a rather extensive document of some twenty thousand words consisting of two parts—a complete statement of demands together with a detailed justification of them and an explanation of the individual points they contain, and a supplement which co-ordinates them into terse slogans. It is eloquently, often finely written. Textually its principal authors are probably R. H. Tawney, Arthur Greenwood and Leonard Woolf. But the anxiety of the party to make the programme encyclopædic rather than philosophically satisfactory led obviously to sacrifices. The party conference even went further and added some trimmings which were more cranky than seriously political.

The programme begins with a polemic. In the place where we Continentals would expect to find a searching examination of tendencies in the development of economic conditions and the mechanism of class forces is an introduction which states that the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer " in a characteristic speech " has said that " the Cabinet has given a period of stability to the country."

" It has indeed! In its determination to make

the world safe for plutocracy it has fastened on the nation a stability more alarming than many crises —the stability of aimlessness, of torpor, and, should it continue, of decay. It has stabilised luxury and squalor, private waste and public parsimony, idleness and the disorganisation of productive industry, an expenditure upon armaments which, in spite of trifling reductions, is still extravagant and a not less extravagant economy upon the services which fortify the health and enrich the spirit of the whole community. . . . The only detail it has forgotten to stabilise is a civilised standard of life for the workers of Great Britain."

This appeal of the Labour Party is addressed to workers in office and factory and laboratory, to scientific workers and high-placed administrators; in a word, to all who by reason of their intelligence and devotion have helped to build up civilisation. The following is a characteristic extract:

" (The Labour Party) speaks, not as the agent of this class or that, but as the political organ created to express the needs and voice the aspirations of all who share in the labour which is the lot of mankind. . . . It calls upon them with confidence to aid it in its task. . . . The Labour Party is a Socialist party. Its aim is the organisation of industry and the administration of the wealth it produces in the interest . . . of all who bring the contribution of useful service to the common stock. Its Socialism is therefore neither a sentimental aspiration for an impossible

> Utopia nor a blind movement of revolt against poverty and oppression. . . . It is a conscious systematic and unflagging effort to use the weapons forged in the victorious struggle for political democracy to end the capitalist dictatorship. . . . The Labour Party stands for the deliberate establishment of a social order in which the resources of the community shall be organised and administered with a single eye to securing for all its members the largest possible measure of economic welfare and personal freedom."

The programme then proceeds to an examination of the benefits supposedly accruing from the four years of Conservative government and to the claims put forward by the Liberal Party. Both are vigorously denied. Neither party is capable of carrying out the changes demanded by the altered conditions of the twentieth century—because " the governing classes have not yet realised that the nineteenth century is over." To the Labour Party has fallen the task of carrying out this transition.

> " In the bankruptcy of capitalism—a bankruptcy revealed, not only by its failure to offer a tolerable livelihood to the mass of the people, but by its inability to harness for the service of man the new resources which the progress of science has revealed, or even to administer existing resources with the efficiency which was once its special boast—Labour alone can lead the nation

to a prosperity established on the secure foundations of knowledge, goodwill, and the comradeship of all in the service of all.

" The Labour Party is well aware that, thanks largely to the policy of the present Government, it will succeed to an estate which is heavily encumbered. It is all the more determined, therefore, that the task of reconstruction shall be begun without delay. Confident of itself and strong in the support of the workers of the nation, Labour has no need for the violence which is the weapon of the weak."

The programme here stresses the *leitmotiv* of the whole pamphlet. The Labour Party will achieve its aims only " along the path of peaceful evolution," " supported by the majority of electors and within the framework of the ordinary democratic machinery."

At the end the introductory refrain is again taken up—to close on the following note:

" It is convinced that, in industry as in politics, government by consent is not only more humane but actually more efficient than autocracy and that the rich diversities of human capacity and character will achieve their full development only when arbitrary inequalities of circumstance and condition have been swept away.

" To its faith in personal liberty and social equality it joins, what is no less essential to a civilised society, the conviction that the law of life is co-operation and that the progress of man-

kind is to be achieved not through the struggle for personal gain or individual aggrandisement but by the deliberate organisation of the resources of the whole community in the service of all. It is on such foundations, the Labour Party holds, that the Socialist Commonwealth of the future must be built. It appeals to men and women of goodwill in all classes of the community to aid it to accomplish that indispensable task."

Labour and the Nation: Summary

" The Labour Party asks for power. If granted power it will use it both to lay the foundations of a new social order and to relieve distress by carrying out as rapidly as parliamentary opportunity permits the policy embodied in 'Labour and the Nation,' of which the following legislative and administrative measures are a summary ":

Unemployment

1. The establishment of adequate provision for unemployed workers.
2. Amendment of Unemployment Insurance Acts.
3. Withdrawal of children under 15 from the labour market.
4. Provision for widows and orphans and veterans of industry.
5. Repeal of Eight Hours Act in the coal industry.

Development of Industry and Trade

1. Establishment of a National Economic Committee.

2. Control of the Bank of England by a public corporation, including representatives of the Treasury, Board of Trade, Industry, Labour and the Co-operative movement; encouragement of co-operative and municipal banking; international conference for the regulation of the value of gold.
3. Transference to public ownership of coal, transport, power and life insurance industries.
4. Commission to prepare scheme for reconstruction of the cotton industry.

Financial Policy

1. Progressive reduction of armament expenditure.
2. Abolition of food taxes and tariffs.
3. Increase in Death Duties.
4. Graduation of Income Tax to relieve smaller and increase contributions from larger incomes.
5. Graduated surtax on incomes over £500 per annum.
6. Taxation of Land Values.

International Peace and Co-operation

1. Renunciation of war by international treaty; negotiation of national agreements through League of Nations.
2. Reduction of armaments; opposition to compulsory military service.

3. Acceptance of the jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice and General Act of Arbitration.

The British Commonwealth of Nations

1. Establishment of closest co-operation on terms of equality between Great Britain and the Dominions.
2. Self-government for India.
3. Strengthening and extension of authority of the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations.

Political Democracy

1. The maintenance of the unquestioned authority of the House of Commons.
2. Uncompromising resistance to the establishment of a second chamber with authority over finance and power to hamper the House of Commons and defeat democratic decisions.
3. Abolition of plural voting.
4. The establishment of full civil and political rights for Civil Servants.
5. Drastic legislation against corrupt practices at elections and the abolition of practices which confer special political advantages upon wealth.
6. The establishment of complete publicity with regard to party funds and the termination of the practice of selling so-called honours.

7. The creation of separate legislative assemblies in Scotland, Wales, and England with autonomous powers in matters of local concern.

IV: COMMENT AND CRITICISM

Ten fateful years, that have left their deep imprint on the visage of British Labour, lie between the publication of the " New Social Order" of 1918 and the Birmingham programme. By this time the Labour Party had risen from the comparative insignificance to which it was condemned as third among the parties, to second place among them, to the honour of " His Majesty's Opposition " and alternative government. Its parliamentary rise is reflected in the following figures:

Year	Seats contested	Seats won	Votes cast for Labour	Labour Party Membership
1910 (Dec.)	56	42	370,802	1,430,539
1918	361	57	2,244,945	3,013,129
1922	414	142	4,236,733	3,311,036
1923	427	191	4,348,379	3,155,911
1924	514	151	5,487,620	3,194,399

Between 1918 and 1923 the party had more than trebled its seats in the House, and nearly doubled its number of voters. At the end of January 1924 it took over for a few months the business of government for the first time. In 1924, in spite of an

increased poll, it suffered parliamentary defeat, and overcame the crisis of confidence into which it was plunged by its shabbily engineered fall from power. In 1926, after the collapse of the General Strike, it weathered the severest storm that has ever shaken the British Labour movement. Broadly considered, in the decade between 1918 and 1928 the Labour Party had risen from being merely a third political party, to which the national concentration of the war years had lent a certain political influence, to rank as a potential government.

This change in function on the part of the party in the body politic of the nation did not lead to those external struggles and internal pains which accompanied the process on the Continent and especially in Germany. It was accomplished easily, almost unconsciously. The reasons for this have been developed at length by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in an old work, "The Socialist Movement," which appeared some years before the war. In it he stressed the fact that the British party was subject to other conditions and influences than German social democracy.

Before the war social democracy in Germany had no direct parliamentary approach to national influence. The Labour Party from its very inception was member of a Parliament responsible to the public

for its decisions and constitutionally empowered to carry its wishes into effect:

> "A chamber responsible to public opinion for its acts and free constitutionally to make its will effective must keep in touch with every phase of the public mind and must make itself responsible for every step in national evolution. . . . The parties in such a chamber have to pay far more attention to method and immediate programmes than to abstract principles. . . . They will be far less able to take purely negative attitudes. . . . The consequences of their action upon the general political situation, the relation which every question bears to the larger programmes and to the advantage or disadvantage of other parties must ever be in their minds. In other words, whilst the eyes of the parties in an irresponsible legislature like the Reichstag are fixed upon the horizon, those of parties in a responsible legislature like the House of Commons are fixed at their feet. To-day and to-morrow are of relatively small importance under the former conditions; they are of the greatest importance under the latter conditions. Under the former conditions hard and fast lines can be drawn between parties; under the latter there are transition groups which blur the great divisions."

In the circumstances described by MacDonald it would be strange if the rise from being a hopeless minority under ordinary parliamentary conditions, to the position of official opposition and alternative

government had not brought with it some qualitative change in party policy. The Labour Party came into being without a revolutionary ideology. It did not envision the State as an inimical instrument of oppression, nor did the State feel in the Labour Party a body foreign to its nature and functions. It was born as a parliamentary institution, reared in democratic parliamentarianism, and though not invited to share responsibility in measures of government, had none the less to share responsibility for the continued existence or fall of a bourgeois government. It has never stood *hors de la loi* nor suffered proscription from any emergency act. It has no heroic epoch in its past, that time of illegality, underground organisation and propaganda with leaders in exile that so profoundly influenced the pre-war policy of the German Social Democratic Party. The leaders of the party have never been branded as outsiders by social boycott, and even though a line was drawn in the case of Keir Hardie, it was more of his own seeking and wish than that of the other side. The position of Hardie in the House differed not very vitally from the social division that existed twenty years ago between Liberal and Conservative, and which found expression in the boycott of Liberal tradesmen by the ladies of the Primrose League and that famous

Times article which appealed to ladies in high society not to invite Liberal ministers to their receptions.

To-day all traces of social distinction between Socialist and other M.P.s have completely disappeared. Ten months of Labour government swept away the last vestiges and a division of tables in the dining-room of the House of Commons in the same manner as in the restaurant of the German Reichstag would be unthinkable in England. The way in which the attempts of the Socialist members from the Clyde to lend a Socialist complexion to their way of life were met was uncommonly illuminating. Both Conservatives and Liberals refused to recognise these foibles as expression of the class war and regarded them as nothing more than a rather sympathetic eccentricity. In the same way James Maxton enjoys a popularity on the " other side of the House " and in the capitalist dailies that stands in striking contrast to his fanatical extremism.

All these things militated against the growth of an ideology peculiar only to the Labour Party. It is true that a proud class-consciousness flourished in its ranks, but it was difficult to distinguish from a species of professional pride. The consciousness of their Socialist mission might grow clearer and clearer, but it was not conceived as a declaration of

war on the obtaining order, as a call to revolution. The Labour Party has remained spared that conflict of conscience into which the Socialists of Central Europe were plunged after the collapse of 1918, which has led to an almost irreparable ideological confusion.

The Birmingham programme is in direct descent from the decisions of its earliest conferences by way of the 1918 programme. If the two are compared it is not surprising that the 1928 programme should, broadly considered, represent a repetition of the demands contained in " Labour and the New Social Order." The main points are mostly taken over in their entirety, but there is a certain weakness and lack of accentuation as against the 1918 programme. The latter demanded " immediate nationalisation "; the Birmingham expresses itself with rather more caution and demands, without even giving it pride of place, the progressive transformation of the key industries, " with full regard to special needs and changing conditions," into self-governing industries. Where the 1918 programme speaks of " the revolution in national finance," that of 1928 deals with the " control of currency and credit." It is true that the demand for the conversion of the Bank of England into a public corporation was actually a step further advanced than in 1918, but all appearance of this is

avoided and the matter treated as though it were merely the inevitable outcome of the reflections of healthy commonsense. Apart from this, special emphasis is laid upon " credit control," which the Labour Party (alone among the Socialist parties of Europe!) has brought within the range of its demands. This marks not only a powerful subjective progress in the mentality of the British Labour movement, but makes the Birmingham programme on a most important point the most modern among those of all the parties that form the International.

It is characteristic of a programme designed to fit a new political situation that against that of 1918 it should represent an extension of demands but avoid confining itself to any definite methods or forms of realisation. It is amazing how many times it falls back on the expedient of a Royal Commission to determine exactly along what lines the next steps should proceed. For instance, the whole temperance question has been shelved repeatedly. The 1918 programme, in accordance with demands as old as the Labour Party itself, insisted on local option. The programme of 1928 contents itself with pledging a future Labour Government to call a Royal Commission whose duty it shall be " to study the development and changes that have taken place in recent years at home and abroad, and to make

suggestions for any desirable changes and methods of control with a view to future legislation." At the Birmingham Conference the unmistakable way in which this question was dodged gave rise to lively controversy and showed how deeply divided on this point the party is.

It is not possible here to review all the changes in the 1918 programme in detail. I will examine only one group of demands, not only because they throw a clear light on the psychological development of the Labour Party, but because they reveal the vital difference in the English and Continental attitudes towards fundamental questions. In addition to the right to vote on the part of Civil Servants, the 1918 programme demanded proportional representation of parliamentary minorities, shorter Parliaments, and abolition of the House of Lords. The demand for " proportional representation of minorities " must not be understood as a definite adherence of the party to the system of so-called Proportional Representation, but in so far as it had meaning it expressed itself definitely on the side of reform of the present electoral rights of relative majorities. The demand for a shorter Parliament ran along the same lines; this was also intended as a protection of a minority against the power of a government majority that had long outlived its original mandate. The whole group

ends up with the demand for the abolition of the House of Lords and in the proclamation of definite opposition to any attempt at " revision of the machinery of government by the creation of a second (reformed) chamber, whether an elected body or otherwise, whether formed on the principle of heredity or other privilege or not." It is interesting to note what became of these points put forward in 1918, which are self-evident enough from any democratic standpoint, in " Labour and the Nation " of 1928.

The demand for passive electoral rights for men serving in the Army, Navy, and Air Force and the Civil Service has been quietly dropped. Electoral reform was whittled down to an attack on the relatively unimportant survival of the plural vote; the demand for shorter Parliaments was cancelled; and the abolition of the House of Lords disappeared entirely as a point from the programme. Political experience gained in the last ten years brought in its train a weakening and change of attitude on all these points.

The Birmingham Conference limited itself to demanding " full rights of citizenship and political rights " for officials. Theoretically this embraces passive electoral rights for members of the Civil Service, but in practice the omission reflects

uncertainty. None who has followed the inner discussions of the Labour Party since the fall of the Labour Government would deny that the question of politicalising the Civil Service is sharply disputed. The experience of Labour leaders as Cabinet Ministers has left significant traces behind. In wide circles in the party it is believed that any politicalising of the Civil Service would endanger not only its service to the State in the abstract, but what is far more important to the English as a nation, its concrete services to parliamentary government by any party. British officialdom (with the exception of the Diplomatic Service), it is argued here in England, is as a fact politically neutral, and as a further fact its close connection with the State makes the Civil Service as a whole more kindly disposed towards the Socialist than towards other parties—the Socialist Party contemplates entrusting the State with greater and more important duties. Any politicalisation, therefore, must tend towards the disadvantage of the Labour Party. Such an attitude is clearly only possible in a country in which officials are not consciously recruited from a definitely reactionary social caste (as was the case in Imperial Germany), and in which a succession of Liberal and Conservative Governments has preserved the words "conservative" and "constitutional" from a confusion of identity.

The Labour Party in its majority may hold that the Civil Service should be accorded electoral rights, both active and passive, but feels that any political-isation of those high officials who act in an advisory capacity to the Cabinet must be avoided at all costs.

The change of attitude towards electoral reform, again the result of experience, is even more striking. Before the 1918 election the Labour Party was a minority whose parliamentary influence stood in grotesque disproportion to the size of its poll and influence outside the House of Commons. In the meantime it reached a position where the peculiarities of the British electoral system began to tell in its favour, and which gave it the prospect of an independent parliamentary majority far sooner than could any system based on the niceties of abstract mathematical justice. But nevertheless it would be false to see in this change of attitude, which is not shared, for instance, by a man like Philip Snowden, evidence of mere political opportunism. The leaders of the party are sincerely convinced that from the standpoint of practical politics any system that tends towards giving a clear parliamentary majority is preferable to one which necessitates the formation of minority parties and, by a distribution of seats in accordance with laws of mathematical justice, threatens the permanent infliction of Coalition

Government and all its attendant evils. Ramsay MacDonald, who has never expressed himself in favour of electoral reform, touched upon this very point in his " The Socialist Movement " long before the war.

> " Hence, the referendum and proportional representation present themselves to the Socialist in alluring garments. . . . The former is but a clumsy and ineffective weapon which the reaction can always use more effectively than the democracy. Proportional representation adds greatly to the expense of elections, offers increased opportunities for the manipulating caucus managers, makes majorities and governments more dependent upon stray odd men in the legislature, and returns to Parliament a greater number of men than are there now whose votes represent no opinion and carry out no mandate because so many will be returned on single issues—*e.g.* Temperance—but will have to vote on every question that comes before Parliament. The Socialist knows that democracy in government can be secured only by an efficiently working machine and not by an elaborate set of paper perfections of beautiful but intangible delicacy."

This excerpt proves clearly that for the British Socialist there is no question of principle or expediency on this point, as the decision has moved to an entirely different plane. Here in England the alternatives are not a " mathematically just or else an undemocratic electoral system," as the problem would

undoubtedly present itself to the Continental Socialist, but "practical function or theoretical excellence." That is the attitude which accounts for the shelving of the problem, and, I repeat, it would be false to estimate the Labour Party attitude as mere opportunism. The fact that the electoral system prevalent in Great Britain simplifies the political situation, works towards the extermination of the politically senescent Liberal Party, and clears the way for its own rise to power, is sufficiently legitimate reason for the Labour Party to acquiesce in its retention.

From the same standpoint, but for different reasons, the demand for the abolition of the Lords was dropped. Since the Asquithian reform it is debarred from making decisions on Bills of a financial character, and to-day represents more a kind of brake—an institution which can refer back contentious measures for a period of three years—than a real power in the land. As political power lies so fully in the hands of the Commons that in actual practice one can speak of a one-chamber system, the Labour Party can feel no valid cause for its present abolition. It is regarded as an anachronism, and Labour is unconscious of the irony of the situation that forces a Socialist Prime Minister to elevate workers' representatives to the rank of nobility and to recruit part of a workers' Government from a House of Lords;

but all these compromises are thought to be preferable to the dangers which would threaten were it abolished and inimical political forces were unleashed which are at present held in check. The Birmingham Conference opens up a rather Gilbertian vista of a preponderantly Socialist society with a feudal first chamber whose hereditary nobility will henceforth be elevated from the ranks of the Socialist and Labour movements.

In *substance*, British Socialism differs on one important point from the Socialism of the rest of the world. So far as can be gathered from the authoritative statements on the subject, British Socialism will regard its main task as fulfilled when the transfer of the means of production to the ownership and control of the community (that is, when a radical change in the distribution of income) has been effected. It appears to be prepared to acknowledge the old traditional distribution of work, within the framework of the capitalist machine, between the organisers and directors of the apparatus of production, on the one hand, and manual workers with no direct influence on the direction, on the other, provided that the former capitalist monopoly of education is abolished and equal opportunities to rise are thus guaranteed to all young people. In other words, its aim is not to alter the position of

the individual worker in the productive process, but merely to sweep away the dividend hunter, and to afford every gifted schoolchild the chance of obtaining the education necessary to qualify for posts as managers and organisers.

The Marxian Socialism of the Continent, on the contrary, regards it as one of its chief tasks to alter the relationship of the individual workman to the productive process in which he participates; that is to say, within his factory or works. It does not, therefore, stop at an alteration in the organisation of property and the distribution of wealth as such, but seeks, directly and indirectly, to secure for the individual worker an increased influence on production in the industry in which he is employed. The struggle for the works council as a first step towards this change in the position of the worker within industry is the external expression of this side of Continental Socialism. From it Continental Socialism derives one of its strongest psychological impulses. It is curious to find that British Socialism (especially since the collapse of the Guild Socialist movement) seems to have relegated entirely to the background this psychologically important element of the Socialist system of the rest of the world. This is particularly evident in the remarkable abandonment of the works council movement in Great Britain.

If the Birmingham programme is compared with those issued latterly by the Continental parties, and in particular with the Social Democratic " Heidelberg " programme, one point of difference apart from fundamental theoretical divergences positively leaps to the eye. The Continental programmes, almost without exception, contain a certain group of demands, not in themselves socialistic, but which for historical and sociological reasons have formed a kind of chemical affinity with the Labour movement. Under this heading come all that series of cultural demands which have their being in the consciousness of a conflicting Socialist and capitalist morality and which turn on problems of sex, the prevailing marriage laws, and the relation of Church and State. Even the Heidelberg programme, which touches upon these matters with a certain reserve, contains clauses demanding disestablishment of the Church, co-education of both sexes, and removal of the stigma of illegitimacy. And in addition to the points explicitly touched upon in programmes, in all Continental Socialist parties there is a widespread tacit agreement on the necessity for a change in attitude towards questions of contraception, interruption of pregnancy, and revision of medieval legislation on homosexuality, etc.

Here, more than upon any other point, the

difference between the Continental and British Socialist parties becomes apparent, and the close connection of British Labour with British national culture and tradition revealed. Otto Bauer, in the " Marxian Studies," has classified a process in a certain stage of working-class evolution which, owing to special circumstances, has been operative in the British movement from its very beginnings. " Just as the working-class in any country," he wrote, " in approaching power must adapt the methods and practices of their struggle to the special peculiarities of the national terrain, so must its theories, as they take in more and more culture be coloured by its national culture." This close affinity of the Labour Party with traditions of national culture has been especially favoured by the circumstances of its tardy birth, the lack of a class-struggle ideology, and a historical period of conflict with State and Society. Separated by no class barriers from the mental and spiritual concepts of capitalism, which would otherwise have given birth to an exclusively proletarian way of life and morality, and deep-rooted in national religious tradition, the Labour Party has never been able to make a clean breakaway from capitalist culture. The widespread religious nonconformity of the working-class and close affinity with the Puritan traditions of the dissenting churches,

militated effectively against the rise of any radical proletarian culture. In the words of a young American Socialist writer, the average English Labour Party member would be no less indignant at the attitude of the Continental Socialist towards religious questions than the average Anglican bishop!

The formation of a common cultural front between the Labour Party and Continental Socialism is therefore only feasible within very narrow limits. And it is by no means the case, as is so frequently believed on the Continent, that the divergency of the two attitudes on these cultural questions is due merely to expediency on the part of the Labour Party, an expediency dictated by electoral necessities and the desire to present the least possible vulnerability of front to attacks that must inevitably be delivered in a strongly puritanical country. The indignant disgust which the attitude of Continental women Socialists towards legalisation of abortion aroused should have opened the eyes of many who believed these differences merely superficial or tactical. Those who participated in the International Women's Conference in Brussels will still remember the veiled but unmistakable condemnation uttered by Dr. Marion Phillips, speaking in the name of the Women's Organisations of the British Labour Party. The attitude prevalent among Continental women

Socialists towards "compulsory motherhood," she pointed out, would arouse the greatest opposition among the women of Great Britain, and the whole idea would only wound and outrage their tenderest sensibilities.

For the Continental the most illuminating (and I trust to be forgiven if I say entertaining) light shed upon this very subject was the discussion published in the autumn of 1928 in the *New Leader*, that always interesting organ of the I.L.P. An anonymous author, writing under the pseudonym "27," delivered himself with terrific emphasis in a series of articles on the collapse of puritanism among the new generation, the dangers of sexual abstinence, and the justification of extra-marital sex experience, etc. "27," evidently fired with convert enthusiasm by first contact with crude psycho-analytical conclusions long regarded as *vieux jeu* on the Continent, gave triumphant vent to commonplaces rendered rather comic by their overstatement. The general trend of his case represented what has long been common opinion among Continental Socialists, but here in England a Socialist clergyman joined in the discussion with every sign of horror and indignation. A mother of a family wrote and described how she had been compelled secretly to destroy the current copy before it made appearance at the family break-

fast table, and another letter, bearing every evidence of emanation from a panel doctor's consulting-room, bore an eloquent medical plea for pre-marital chastity. Another letter to the editor made no bones about the fact that such moral bolshevism could only bode the direst consquences for the political fate of the Labour Party.

Here yawns most ominously and evidently the deep gulf that divides British and Continental Socialism, but to clear away all possibilities of misunderstanding it must be stated that among the younger generation of Socialists, not only in Germany and Austria but also in France, there are strong signs of a neo-puritanical movement which is perhaps one of the most interesting phenomena to be observed at the present moment in the development of Continental Socialism.

Generally speaking, it can be stated with all certainty that opinions such as those published by "27" are by no means in accord with those of either organised Labour or its leaders in Britain. British Labour and its leaders are essentially Puritan. Such statements, so far as they can be regarded as a definite tendency, are not representative of an individual party but rather of a certain section of the new generation, although British public opinion may not be prepared to admit this as a fact.

On the contrary, the foreign observer can better imagine the Liberal Party, even though we underestimate its Nonconformist prejudices, as champion of these concepts than the Labour Party. To generalise, in comparison with the Marxist Socialism of Continental parties, the Labour Party in cultural questions is a neutral, not to say conservative, body.

This progressive adaptation of the various working-class parties to the cultural inheritance of their respective countries is however balanced by a progressive approximation of their political methods, at least in so far as their immediate social demands are concerned. To mention only one example, the democratisation of Central Europe has led, as Ramsay MacDonald foretold in 1911, to a close approximation of German Social Democratic political method to that of the Labour Party, while on the other hand Socialism has led the Labour Party to a closer spiritual affinity with the Social Democratic Party. To-day the two parties stand in immeasurably closer relationship than in the first half decade of the twentieth century, a fact that must deeply impress itself on anyone who has taken part in the executive meetings of the Socialist International. The marked differences among the various Labour parties and their closer approximation to their

respective national cultures—a fact too little appreciated in post-war literature on the subject—finds its antithetical balance in their more general psychological integration. The Continental parties, freed from the heavy bonds of a rigidly interpreted Marxism, give ever freer expression to their instinctive sympathies with national culture and tradition, while the Labour Party with its affirmation of Socialist faith is bridging the important and historic gulf that separated it from them in the past. Thus, in spite of increasing national peculiarities, a new and sounder basis for the international co-operation of a Socialist democratic Labour movement is in process of creation. True, the scope of this co-operation is more limited than was imagined by the founders of the First International, who saw in it an instrument of world revolution. To-day its functions are far more modest and its radius of activity more circumscribed. It desires less and less to be confounded with the spirit of militant revolution that animates the Third Communist International; but, in spite of this circumscription, it is to-day more than ever in touch with realities. The very fear of its British and German representatives on the International Executive of allowing their policy to be dictated by an extra-domestic body is one of the strongest guarantees that the Labour and

Socialist projects of the International and their realisation, its manifestos and its actual power, will bear and preserve the necessary harmonious balance.

Chapter III

THE SPIRITUAL ASPECT OF THE LABOUR PARTY

i: SOCIALIST UNORTHODOXY

"For every Socialist created by 'Das Kapital,' a thousand have been created by the Bible."—Keith Hutchison, "Labour in Politics."

TIES of flesh and blood but none of soul and spirit bind the Luddites, the Syndicalists of the eighteen-thirties, and the revolutionary fighters of Chartism with those who founded the Labour Party at the turn of the century. In the nineteen-hundreds no heroic tradition remained to kindle dead ashes into raging fire. The spark of revolution had died out. To the sons remained no memory of their fathers' battles in the early days of capitalism. Those who founded the Labour Party were proletarians of the third and fourth generation, skilled and qualified workers, trade unionists, well organised and well fed, and protected by law from the worst consequences of an industrialism to which their ancestors had fallen defenceless victims. For decades they had profited from and ridden the tide of a nation-wide industrial prosperity. True, it was only a crumb from Imperialism's groaning board that had fallen to their

share, but a crumb that made them appear opulent in comparison with their fellow-workers in other lands. In their way of life and their standard of life they stood nearer to the middle-class than to the Continental proletariat.

The trade unionists who founded the Labour Party did not feel themselves leaders of a class army in a class struggle, but none the less were they animated by an authentic spirit of class pride. The chaotic development of a new industrial system had displaced and uprooted their forefathers from the soil that gave them birth and made them alone among the British peoples "unprejudiced," as Friedrich Engels expresses it in his classic description of the *via dolorosa* of the British working-class. Their children were born deep-rooted in national cultural and especially religious tradition. The subjective impulse that urged them towards severing their connection with the old "respectable" parties was not rebellion against the prevailing social and economic order. Rather was it consciousness of the fact that the Liberal and Conservative parties, in view of the increasing challenge to Great Britain's monopoly in the markets of the world, were increasingly less in a position to safeguard the interests of a working-class electorate. The day when the capitalist could accord the working-class some

parts of the fruits of Imperialism without injury to his own interest had passed. In addition, the founders of the Labour Party felt the time ripe for an extension of trade-union activity by means of co-ordinated political action. The task of the party, as conceived by these men, was purely empiric; its aim was the practical satisfaction of common practical needs, and it was only the ultimate conflict with realities that first revealed to them the real significance of their struggle and made them aware of the fundamental differences that separated them from the older parties. So gradually did they come into conflict with the parties to which they had formerly entrusted the representation of their interest that nearly twenty years had passed before it one day dawned upon them that they had become Socialist. "Under the conditions obtaining in Great Britain Socialism is the last and not the primary form of a Socialist political movement," wrote Ramsay MacDonald in 1911.

It is true, of course, that there was always a handful of Socialists to be found among the utilitarians who formed the party. And these again were divided into three (and even four) different groups, each separated from the other by a wide gulf. The Fabians propagated an elastic form of State Socialism and only perceived in the Labour Party one of the

organisations that should be converted to Socialism. The I.L.P., extracting the kernel from the Fabian fruit, sounded a specific British note and evolved a specifically British humanitarian Socialist form. The S.D.F. preached the class-struggle and a strict doctrine on a foundation of Marxism, whose real meaning and implications, however, it had never been fully able to grasp.

Of the three, the Fabians and I.L.P. have decisively influenced the evolution of British Socialism. The S.D.F., on the other hand, never gained the ear nor confidence of the British masses. It was totally foreign to the spirit and temperament of the English. It demanded a belief in dogma and authority. In its teaching it " went the whole hog " —the reforms to be achieved under capitalism were mere palliatives; it was possessed by a mechanistic concept of historic evolution totally at variance with British inclinations and experience. Marxism was the weapon which proved fatal to the Social Democratic head when laid on the British block.

Continental Socialist literature has never dealt sufficiently with this phenomenon, with this failure of Marxism in England, and no real attempt has been made to reveal its underlying causes. The success of Marxism on the Continent was only possible because not only the intellectuals but also the workers

themselves felt the need of a constructive theoretical explanation of their movement. The British worker had not the slightest desire to see the political and industrial activities of his class in historical perspective. Marxist teaching on the Continent made strong appeal to the " exploited wage slave." The British worker never quite felt that he fitted into this category. He never felt himself to be a proletarian, and was therefore not prepared to accept the word in its Marxist implication and significance and to invert his own concept of what constituted class-pride. The Marxian theories of value and of increasing misery of the working-class suffered a similar fate, and this at a time when they held pride of place in Continental Socialist agitation. To be called " wage-slave " did not wring the withers of the British working man. It contained no appeal likely to induce him to enter the vast edifice of Marxian thought, and there to learn of the State that it was an instrument of oppression in the interests of an enemy class and that the struggle between capital and labour would and must be waged with ever-increasing severity. Nurtured in the current religious beliefs of his country and led by men of a definitely idealist outlook, he could feel no urge to an understanding and acceptance of a materialist interpretation of history. At last, after

decades have run their course, it has been found possible to reconcile Christianity and economic materialism and that in such a manner as to make Marxist concepts practically unrecognisable to the Marxist.

The development of Socialism in England fulfilled itself independently of the main and mighty stream of Marxian thought, even though in its platform language use might be made of certain Marxian phrases, certain traces of Marxian thought be found in its literature, and some few among its leaders be not entirely unindebted to Marx.

It is a strange vagary of historical dialectics that Marxian Socialism, which by its formulation and analysis of the condition of the working-class in England actually gave the strongest dynamic impulse to world Socialism, should remain to all intents and purposes without effect in England itself. The worker living in England in the year 1899 would or could not recognise himself for the proletarian depicted by Marx and Engels.

In these circumstances the fate of the Social Democratic Federation is almost a tragedy. It alone among the parties was the spiritual heir of a first-born and revolutionary proletariat. Alone among the parties it sought to lend a sprawling formless movement definite philosophic form and to imbue

it with the spirit of a proletarian economic theory. The same teachings which helped the Continental parties to the proud place they enjoy passed unheeded by the British working-class. Those men in England who most resemble the pioneers of Continental Socialism passed their obscure lives unhonoured, while men who on the Continent could never have gained the ear of the masses became the leaders of the British Labour movement.

If, to repeat Wilhelm Liebknecht, Marx changed Socialism from a sect to a party, the Social Democratic Party threatened to change the mass expression of British Socialism once more into a sect.

Any attempt to reduce British Socialism, as it is expressed in the basic and general demands contained in its programmes and in its literature and oratory, to terms of elementary economic and political principle is frustrated by the very multiplicity of tendencies, each contradictory of the other, which they reveal. When the prerequisites for such a task are lacking any attempt at analysis and general classification is hopeless.

Bernard Shaw has pointed out in an interesting appendix to Edward R. Pease's excellent "History of the Fabian Society" that scarcely an economist of any standing, from Ricardo to Marx himself, and down to the discoverer of the theory of marginal

value, but has been hailed as master by one or other leader and thus left his mark upon the party's economic outlook. And all these theories and teachings have a manifold connection with the actual facts of the party's day-to-day experiences and struggles. The Birmingham programme, it would now seem, represents an economic unity ripe for theoretic formulation. Just as Socialism, in Ramsay MacDonald's words, represents not the first but the last stage in the evolution of the British Labour movement, so it would appear does the co-ordination of its economic principles.

The Birmingham programme's attempt at a synthesis has by no means cleared up the party's theoretical confusion. Even if we find a certain unity on purely economic problems, a unity which embraces all points of view from Sidney Webb to James Maxton, there remain on all questions of finance and credit widely different and irreconcilable schemes of thought. These range from the semi-Liberal orthodoxy of Philip Snowden through the Radical single-Tax propaganda of Colonel Wedgwood to the inflationism of the I.L.P., and to the peculiarly heterodox variety of it, fathered by Oswald Mosley and John Strachey, which was a strange blend of J. M. Keynes and Major Douglas of credit-scheme fame. This last seems lately to

have been tactfully dropped, but the I.L.P.'s heresies continue cheerfully.

The same adventurous economic and financial credit schemes have made sudden and intoxicating entrance into the conclaves of the Continental parties, but, thanks to the Marxist training of the leaders, their sponsors have never been taken with the seriousness they would desire. The masses in the Continental Socialist movement have always been accorded a wide measure of heretical freedom, but a certain uniformity of outlook and principle is always demanded from the leaders. By contrast (at least until 1918!), a most extensive freedom of opinion among leaders was a characteristic of the British movement and, for the foreigner, the most striking evidence of this is the matter-of-fact way in which any individual backbencher in the House of Commons can polemise and disagree with the party's official spokesman.

Adolf Braun, in his "Proposals for a Revision of the Social Democratic Programme," could write as though it were a matter of course that "the economic premises must be fully accepted before any social, political and cultural demands can be put forward," but, as a fact, this attitude is purely a matter of course to any Socialist reared in a Marxist school and in the Continental tradition; but British Labour,

denying historical materialism, also denies the necessity for any theoretic basis to its practice. The empiric method is given pride of place in its economic outlook and action.

Any attempt to determine theoretically the economics of the Labour Party only serves to show the hopelessness of discovering its philosophic principles. Friedrich Engels was able to say of the German movement with some measure of justification that " we German Socialists are proud to be descended not only from Saint Simon, Fourier and Owen, but also from Kant, Fichte and Hegel." To attempt to determine British Labour as the spiritual heirs of any classic or modern philosophical system would be an apparent absurdity and the sparing efforts made have been lamentably unfortunate. As in its economic aspects, programmes, literature and statements by individual leaders reveal traces of almost innumerable philosophic schools. Natural philosophy, Burke, Owen, Spence and Godwin, have had a certain influence; John Stuart Mill, the positivist philosophy of Comte, and the writings of Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Ruskin, and William Morris have all contributed their share.

In the main, the vital attitude of the British Labour movement, as represented by Ramsay MacDonald in his numerous published works, may

be said to have its origins in natural science. The leader of the Labour Party, replying to a question as to the influence of philosophy and especially the works of Herbert Spencer on his early mental development and the formation of the concepts of State and Society which he represents, wrote: " I came to politics through science—chiefly through biology and geology—rather than through philosophy. Spencer I had read, and also a good deal of Hegel, but I do not pretend to have studied philosophy as I did science."

Here a word of warning in the ear of a certain school of Socialist thought on the Continent which, because British Socialism still retains its peculiar pre-Marxist Socialist traits, its experimental character, because it lacks system and is convinced that the realisation of Socialism lies not in the hands of the working-class alone but in the whole of society, has dubbed it " pre-scientific." This school has further imagined that another stage of development must " inevitably " follow upon this lamentable " pre-scientific " condition, and Marxist teaching be incorporated, at least implicitly, in its concepts and methods before Britain becomes a really adult member of the Socialist international. This attitude may have had some justification in the days when Continental Socialism was powerful and mighty

and the British Labour movement a negligible quantity. Then, its lack of theoretic education might with some validity have been held responsible for its political and organisational weakness. But to-day, it is refuted by the very fact that the same experimental, elastic methods have raised it to the most powerful among the Labour parties of the world. This same retarded intellectual development that is the distinguishing feature of British Socialism has in no way prevented it making use of the most modern parliamentary methods and applying its tactics to modern parliamentary conditions more effectively than any of its fellows, and proselytising among the upper and middle-class with an immeasurably greater degree of success than the Continental parties. The Birmingham programme has shown that, psychologically, the Labour Party is better able to combat modern capitalism than any other party in the world. In these circumstances it might be advisable to discard the label "pre-scientific" and to recognise that here a modern Socialism has arisen through different channels, which not in spite of, but because of its methods under specific conditions in a specific land has become an instrument of working-class emancipation more powerful than any yet forged in any other country.

All attempts, so self-evident to the Continental Socialist, to bring the Labour Party within the bounds of a theoretic and philosophical system must of necessity fail. Its strength does not lie in a single theory, in a single philosophy, as does the Marxist Continental movement, but in a wide variety of philosophic teachings and economic theories.

And however often these countless threads, drawn from past or present, appear in the Labour Party fabric, nevertheless its main warp and woof are purely ethical. The place which economic determinism holds in the Continental parties is filled by the demand for " justice for all mankind " in the British Labour Party. This postulate is only partially based upon economic necessities. " It is the mind of man, with its ideals, its sense of right and wrong, and its aspirations, which makes economic poverty and injustice a serious grievance and gives them that explosiveness which makes them a cause of revolution," an idealist statement by Ramsay MacDonald which is characteristic of the whole British Labour movement. In this demand for " justice for all mankind " which gives the British movement its particular activist character, the age of reason's desire for the " kingdom of heaven on earth " is harmonised with the New Testament ethic and the spirit of the

Sermon on the Mount. " For every Socialist created by ' Das Kapital ' a thousand have been created by the Bible."

Herein lies the explanation of that strange companionship in which ethical demands rub shoulders with a peculiar rationalism. This is the touchstone for the understanding of many of Labour's spiritual aspects, which would otherwise remain bewildering.

In its demand for justice, the Labour Party wields its most powerful weapon in the struggle against economic, political, and social injustice; and herein lies the secret of its attraction for those whose place would otherwise be in the enemy ranks. Here lies the main source of its strength and the cause of that strange admixture of revolt and compromise, of extremism and traditionalism. Utopian Socialism and modern science, religious passion and rationalism here make strange but affectionate bed-fellows. I can but state the fact, and make no attempt to advance economic or sociological reasons.

ii: ORGANISATION AND DESTINY

All observers of the British Labour movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century are agreed that its specific form of organisation reprcsented a departure from Continental development. In the

year 1899 it was not a question of choice between federal organisation or individual membership but between federal organisation and the existence of a Labour Party. This opinion of all historians of British Socialism would seem to be confirmed by the failure of every attempt on the part of the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party to build up a large national organisation on a basis of individual membership.

However this might be, with the founding of the Labour Representation Committee there came into being that form of organisation which remained in the main unaltered during the next two decades, until it began in 1918 to approximate more closely to the Continental form. If on the one hand the federative structure of the Labour Party emanates directly from the character of the Labour Party as an electoral machine, then this exterior feature at the same time reacts on the further destiny of Socialism in England. Here, and I think for the first time, an attempt is made to show what special and particular influence the form of Labour Party organisation has had upon the spiritual and intellectual development of the Party and its consequences for the political life of Great Britain.

To understand the special and peculiar form taken by Labour Party organisation, it is necessary

to compare the divergent methods adopted, in each case for very practical reasons, in building up the Social Democratic Party in Germany and the Labour Party in Great Britain. One difference is immediately striking. The German party grew from its local parties and district units. The whole organisation had its basis in these cells, and from these it drew its whole strength. Herein lies the secret of German social democratic power, a power which the political opponents of German Socialism have never been able to understand during times when, to their amazement, its strength has remained unimpaired despite severe trials and inner crises. The present-day character of " paying-in " night, the monthly meeting of the smallest party unit, is by no means disproof of this contention, although it has largely lost its original vitality, and has degenerated into empty routine.

In contrast to the German party, the British started life as a federal organisation, to which the large trade union groups and Socialist societies were affiliated collectively. These groups did not relinquish their own identity on affiliation. They preserved their own form, function and tradition intact, and the life of the larger party found its greatest expression within their confines. In other words, a trade union branch meeting differed only

from the meeting of a local Labour Party in the latter's agenda. Until 1918 the local trade union branches and the constituent Socialist organisations provided the only common meeting places for Labour Party members.

It is quite clear that this divergence of organisation has had much influence on the outlook and mentality of the members of the two national parties. The Continental worker's membership was the outcome of a personal decision. From the moment of registration the party organisation surrounded him with a whole series of duties and obligations, demanded certain services from him and, to a certain extent, determined his mode of life. Were he at all an active member, his own personal, spiritual, and extra-vocational freedom became the more curtailed. The party absorbed the greater part of his private life. It did not stop at that point where the individual ceases to be solely a political entity but penetrated into his cultural existence, organised him in musical societies and workers' choirs, placed an educational apparatus at his disposal, determined his reading and his mental outlook, through the party library, and obliged him to subscribe to party newspapers. Nor was he free in his sporting associations. He must join, if so inclined at all, workers' sports clubs.

By all these threads he was bound to a common group life which offered him that happiness which comes from participation in a community of interests, and, in so far as he was an organised manual worker, enriched his life with an intensity of experiences before unknown. His entry into the party had a decisive reality that did not fail to influence every aspect of his life.

The virtues of this form of organisation for the intellectual and for those who enter the Socialist movement from the ranks of the middle and upper classes are rather problematical. In the period before the war more than now, entry into the party meant not only a rupture with all his social connections, but, in many cases, of all close association with his non-Socialist professional colleagues.

His conviction and devotion to Socialist faith and ideals, especially if they are not fired by political ambitions, are subjected to a severer test than the worker's. The worker entering the party, accepting its programme and thus acknowledging the class-struggle, finds himself sharing in a common life of which he approves instinctively, and which satisfies more than his purely material and political interests. The organisation is flesh of his flesh and spirit of his spirit.

The Socialist coming from the capitalist ranks finds his acknowledgment of the class-struggle opposed not only to his interests, but also to his instincts. The atmosphere of the party is not congenial. But his convictions are stronger than his instincts, and he is determined to maintain loyally the change in outlook which his entry into the party involves. There is bitter conflict with the family and social circle in which he formerly moved, and to avoid social boycott he must sever all connection with it. Only in cases where he has chosen politics as a career does the group life of the party offer recompense for that which he has lost. In contrast to the attitude of the British Labour Party towards its intellectuals, he meets mistrust and coolness, for unlike the British, the Continental labour movement lacks entirely any belief in the inborn superiority of the upper classes. Far too often it has seen the ruling class fail at decisive moments; too often it has seen its own forecasts confirmed by the tide of events. The term " our betters " has no place in the phraseology of the Continental working-man.

The situation in Great Britain is quite different. Entry into the Labour Party, at least until 1927, followed as a matter of course for all trade unionists (and therefore the majority of the party member-

ship) not as the result of an individual decision but following upon a majority decision of the union, sometimes taken years before. Membership is therefore most frequently only an attribute of loyalty to the union, and by no means the result of personal inner conviction as on the Continent. In addition, the union remains the chief centre, and party life is merely a reflection of union life. For some 98 per cent. the party represents nothing more definite to the trade unionists who compose it than an outside body which appeals to him at election times. The party does not make any extra-political demands upon its members. Here and there they may be united in workmen's clubs and choirs, but these are not the result of systematic organisation on the part of headquarters. Here and there attempts have been made to give sport a definite working-class complexion, as on the Continent, but usually this has been shown to be impracticable, nor is it deemed desirable by the majority of Socialist leaders. That sport, for instance, can be a matter of class division is an idea foreign to the average English Socialist. Party membership for the overwhelming majority in Great Britain represents nothing more in the way of personal obligation than his passive acceptance of the obligation to pay the political levy and to vote (if he chooses, which he

does not always choose) for Labour candidates. It makes no moral demands on the private life of the individual.

In these circumstances the position of the intellectual in the Labour Party is much simpler than on the Continent. On joining the Fabian Society or the I.L.P.—the usual procedure until 1918—he needed to make no acknowledgment of the class war, and was therefore under no moral obligation to break off all his social connections. His private life remained his own affair, and he was thus spared all those problems of conscience which afflict the Continental middle-class Socialist.

That passion for justice, which gives to British Socialism its main characteristic, lays only a very indefinite and general moral obligation on his shoulders. It is to be admitted that the very facility which attends their entry into the Labour Party and the few demands either of soul or body that are made upon them, renders the absorption of the upper-class recruits into the life of the party far less real than on the Continent. In many cases their private life and the cause they have at heart stand in glaring contradiction, and the press has not failed to capitalise the fact by repeated attacks on the " millionaire " members of the Labour Party. But, as on the Continent, these attacks seem to produce

greater effect on the Liberals and Conservatives than on the workers.

Since 1918 two changes have occurred which have brought a closer approximation to Continental methods. The introduction of individual membership—leading to the formation of local groups and women's organisations, working nationally and locally in closest association with the party organisation—has brought the individual member much nearer to the party organisation. The women's organisations, with their dances, whist-drives, outings, etc., have given impulse to a far more active social life, and thus introduced an element of vitality into party group life.

These inner developments have been accompanied by external circumstances which have given a further impulse in the same direction. The Trade Union Act of the Baldwin Government, replacing " contracting-out " by " contracting-in," and aiming at the political neutralisation of the trade unions and consequent material weakening of the Labour Party, robbed it of nearly one and a-half million members. These were the superficial effects desired and realised by the Baldwin Act. What it did not foresee was that it was ridding the party of its apathetic (but financially valuable) ballast, and that it was, in the Socialist sense, cleansing it and making

it a far more class-conscious instrument of Socialist emancipation. This is a classic example of what is known in philosophy as the heterogeneity of cause and effect.

While these changes in organisation have been taking place in the Labour Party since 1918, developments in a different direction have been occurring on the Continent. Before the war the strict spiritual discipline of the German party had a certain parallel in the discipline of Prussian militarism, but as a result of the change in the party's political relationship to the new German state there has been some relaxation of party strictness. Its doors have been opened to non-Marxists, and in actual practice its discipline has given place to a greater personal and spiritual tolerance.

But in all essentials the varying effects produced by the different systems of membership in the two parties hold good.

The difference in organisation has had far-reaching repercussions on the political fate of the Labour Party, and therefore on the whole political life of Great Britain. It has made possible the subservience of the party machine to the parliamentary party, and provided the greatest obstacle to the creation of any intense party group-life. All efforts to this end, of the kind that we understand on the Con-

tinent, have been wrecked by the very independence of the parliamentary party.

The difference between the functions of the party organisation in Great Britain and in the Continental parties has already been pointed out. It has been noted that on the Continent the party machine is sovereign and the parliamentary party subservient; in Great Britain the party machine is only sovereign in the period of dissolution between two parliaments, while during a parliamentary period the parliamentary members in effect become the party. This has a double result. If the independence of the parliamentary members is only made possible by the party's looseness of organisational construction and the lack of any party group life, their sovereignty in turn is due only to their own stultifying effect on any attempt to imbue the Labour Party with an inner party life in the sense understood by us. To the form of organisation is due the parliamentary party's power to give a decision within itself on questions outside itself. The scope of the Labour Party, from the standpoint of political effectiveness, is immeasurably more elastic and opportunist than with us.

More important still is the effect of the form of organisation on the personal policy of the party. In Germany, the fact that the party itself is all-

powerful, and that with it always lies the ultimate decision has, together with the tight bonds of its party life, created the tendency and tradition to entrust the tried and trusted party comrade not only with the highest offices within the party machine, but also with its representation in Parliament. The party official and the Reichstag member are essentially of the same type. In England, on the other hand, the loose form of party organisation and the independence of the parliamentary party have led to a curious dualism; there is no necessary connection between office in the party machine and a seat in the House of Commons. In England preliminary activity within the party machine is not a prerequisite for a parliamentary seat. It has therefore been made possible to select parliamentary candidates outside the ranks of tried and trusted organisers and well-deserving officials and to admit men and women of a purely political type, quite independent of party services. Although there are other considerations here which will be touched upon in the next chapter it is, at least in part, owing to the form of British Labour Party organisation that in its list of parliamentary candidates there should figure so prominently the names of young and untried party members.

Here is a situation which those who hold high

council in the Continental parties would do well to consider. The Continental organisation, making its demands upon everyone, even to the humblest party member, is ethically undoubtedly the higher form; but there also can be no doubt that in many respects the British form is more elastic and adapted to the practical needs of Socialism during a period of even balance of class strength. From an absolute standpoint, the Continental form is the more desirable, but in practice its very merits are a brake on its progress. The Continental parties tend to evolve an official type of leader, one who has risen step by step to his parliamentary seat from the lowest party offices. The British party endeavours to keep apart official activity within the party and parliamentary representation. It produces as the political exponents of Socialism, side by side with the trade union leaders, a type both versatile and equipped with an instinctive feeling for power and government—merits which are rated high above seniority of service to the party.

iii: THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE LABOUR PARTY

Not until 1923 did the Labour Party so change its statutes that it made possible the direct entry of " intellectuals " into its ranks without their having recourse to the three affiliated Socialist bodies. Until

that time the position of the intellectuals within the party, at least from an organisational standpoint, was extremely peculiar. Through the Fabian Society and the I.L.P. they were able to influence the party's mental outlook, but its political practice only in very slight measure. They acted rather in a kind of advisory capacity. The few seats which were allotted on the party Executive to the Fabians and the I.L.P., and the parliamentary candidatures they were able to finance, constituted every position of influence the intellectuals held in the party. And in harmony with the scant representation of intellectuals in the party's leadership, before the war the party itself was statistically more proletarian in its number of manual workers than any other in the world. Not only were 98 per cent. of the membership organised trade union workers, but even these 98 per cent. were predominantly manual workers. The adherence of any intellectual or " black-coated " workers scarcely came into the question. The handful of middle-class intellectuals were statistically negligible. The Fabian Society, with a 100 per cent. membership of intellectuals, figured very insignificantly in comparison with the hundreds of thousands of organised manual workers. Before the war a generous estimate of the party's proportionate membership of intellectuals would be some two per thousand.

To view the party's later development in proper perspective, it is necessary to examine its pre-war groups of intellectuals. The Social Democratic Party, in consequence of its doctrinaire character, was more proletarian in theory than in actual membership. Into its fold were naturally gathered all those foreign Socialists of university origin who had a Marxist education in their own countries and consequently sought contact with the sole Marxist party in Great Britain. The I.L.P., in contrast,was the natural home of those who had passed through the Labour Party to Ruskin College or similar institutions, and represented the English type of worker-intellectual. With them were a certain proportion of middle-class intellectuals, who remained, however, without any influence on the party during the ten years that preceded the outbreak of war, a period during which the Fabians were dominant.

The great attention which the Continental pundits have paid to Fabian pronunciamentos and the vain efforts made to reproduce a similar Continental strain of the species is a proof that this type is indigenous to the British Islands. A comparison of professions followed by the leading Fabians with those practised by Continental intellectuals suffices to show the social differences between the two categories. On the Continent we find that next to

journalists working on party newspapers, members of the medical and legal professions are predominant. The Fabians were composed of higher-grade civil servants, professors, ex-officers, rentiers with an interest in the things of the mind, critics, dramatists and novelists. This array of Fabian Socialists was only possible in one country in the world—and that for a twofold reason: only in England could it be possible for high-grade civil servants, retired army officers and collaborators on the leading capitalist newspapers openly to identify themselves with a Socialist movement without making themselves impossible both socially and professionally, or having to suffer injury to their most material interests. And the British Labour Party was the only one in the world that would even have tolerated their membership.

One link joined these Fabian intellectuals with their fellows on the Continent—both were composed of men of a theoretical and often scientific schooling, with an exclusively academic education and definite intellectual interests. Moreover, their chief sphere of activity in the main lay outside of politics. Until 1918 scarcely a single one of this group, which has played such a decisive part in the history of British Socialism, had any experience of politics as a profession. Sidney Webb was a Civil Servant and

university professor, Olivier a high state official, Bernard Shaw critic and dramatist.

The later intellectual recruits of the years 1918 to 1928 differed from these men and women in their active participation, taken as a matter of course, in the detail work of the party, in preaching the gospel of Socialism at street corners, and in hard work in the district committees. Their work was selfless and done with no eye to the House of Commons; they were devoted to the cause for its own sake. A man such as Bernard Shaw, whose Socialism on the Continent is often regarded as the mere whim and plaything of a great man, doubtless devoted more of his first fifty years of life to street-corner propaganda, Socialist committee work and pamphleteering than he ever gave to his dramatic creations.

The fluctuations in the Fabian Society membership before the war are not without interest. It is true that it gained a constant stream of recruits, but only to see them return to the capitalist parties, whose ranks they had often never really left. Typical middle-class novelists, such as Arnold Bennett, highly clerical dignitaries, Liberals and members of the Conservative Party, have made a brief and not altogether useless appearance on the Fabian stage. The psychological difference between England and the Continent is shown by the fact that

these men neither regarded themselves as renegades nor were they so regarded by their Fabian colleagues. They had merely snapped the links that bound them to political Socialism, but were still bound by a thousand spiritual and personal bonds to their Fabian friends of the Socialist movement. It is part of the strength of Socialism in England, and to the foreign observer one of the strangest things in British life, that the Socialist concept, apart from its immediate adherents, should possess more friends in opposing political parties than in any other European country.

During the war a new wave of intellectuals swept upon the Labour Party down the I.L.P. channel. These war recruits were of a new type, different in many respects from the pre-war intellectuals. Here are meant those numerous conscientious objectors who refused military service on the most varied ethical and religious grounds, and who found in the I.L.P. their one sure moral prop in a threatening inimical world. On release from durance they literally streamed into the I.L.P. But even in excess of these were the former Liberals whose objection to the war lay not only in ethical or religious principle but also in political considerations, and who rushed to the I.L.P as the sole strong anti-war party in Great Britain. These were all pacifists first and Socialist either

secondly or not at all. They accepted Socialism not for its Socialist aims but as a means of ensuring international harmony. It was their pacifist impatience and not their Socialist will that made them adherents of the proletarian left within the Labour Party, a world with which otherwise they could have had no connection.

The Labour Party now became weighted with a small group of former Liberal Quakers and descendants of Nonconformist manufacturers, a group temporarily condemned to lack of influence only by the peculiarities of the then prevalent war psychology. Noel and Charles Buxton are typical representatives of this class. These men and women differed from the post-war recruits, from the middle class and aristocracy in a certain shyness of publicity, love of anonymity, and a selfless devotion independent of any immediate reward. It is interesting to observe that this invasion of pacifist intellectuals, whose absolute pacifism was in complete opposition to the attitude of the majority of the trade union leaders, should have had a repercussion in the gathering of a short-lived anti-intellectual movement, expressed in the propaganda for a " Trade Union Labour Party."

In the meantime two developments, both significant for the future destiny of the Labour Party,

have taken place—the introduction of individual membership and its supersession of the Liberals as His Majesty's Opposition. These circumstances again occasioned a new intellectual spate, a varied and formidable contingent. From the crowd of teachers, black-coated workers of all grades, scientific assistants, and a few young professors, there evolved a new type of Labour Party intellectual and one which left its mark deep on the party during the years 1924 to 1928. And it is this new type, and not the thousands of teachers and employees, which is characteristic of the latest stage of Labour's development—the professional politician appeared in the Labour Party ranks, sometimes rather like a Praetorian guard, whose career keeps careful watch over his conscience. The stamp that marks the caste of Vere de Vere could be detected among the homely working-class faces in the party's ranks. If one is of the opinion that these converts from the traditional ruling class represent the most remarkable phenomenon within the Labour Party since the end of the war, it is a little peculiar to read the views of Max Beer. In his " Contemporary History of British Socialism" he states that there have been " middle-class intellectuals " in Great Britain who have " severed their connections with their class and sought admission to the Labour Party ";

and remarks a little later that with the change of constitution in 1918 the doors of the party were flung open to the "proletarian Intellectuals." Purely technically speaking the doors were thrown open to these "classless" Intellectuals who poured into the Labour Party. They have, however, left no particular traces behind them on the movement. This type of intellectual was of far less moment in the fate of the party compared with the arrival of the political aristocrats, some with large inherited fortunes, titles and honours, distinguished social and family connections and parliamentary seats to which family tradition has given them a tacit right. And exactly of this type it is significant that family and social connections are sought to be maintained in order to present the new allies, in accordance with an old British tradition, with their advantages as tribute of fealty.

Of course this did not always come up to the hopes of the new recruits of the Labour Party. Those families, which before the war regarded Liberalism as an anti-social movement, often saw in their scions' enlistment in the Labour ranks nothing more or less than a desertion to Bolshevism. It should be mentioned in this connection that there is rather an exaggerated idea on the Continent with regard to the frequency and the legitimacy of such

change of party. In England, for instance, it is not to-day expected of any man of ability that he should sink with the Liberal ship when there is a chance of political rescue in another ship's boat. Political effectiveness in England is regarded as something of value in itself, much in the same manner as service to the state in Germany's official hierarchy. But the transfer of so many hopeful young Liberals and Conservatives to the Labour Party has gone near to outraging even the English sense of fair play. Politics in England may be sport, but there still exist men with memories of the golden age of Victoria who feel that the Labour Party "is not quite cricket."

Many of the renegades from the upper classes found themselves the object of strong personal animosity and social boycott to a degree hardly to be expected in England. Even drastic measures such as the paternal curse and disinheritance are not unknown. These men have enjoyed the usual university education in which their ambitions have leaned towards its social, sporting and union aspects rather than towards sound scholarship. The scholarliness characteristic of the Continental intellectual is not highly prized among these gentlemen. Their distinguishing feature is a strong and often rather artificially cultivated will to power that in certain circumstances might be turned to the advantage of the oppressed

and injured, but never for a lost cause. Their transition to Labour is a symbol to the public that Labour is now a permanent and mighty factor in the councils of the nation. In passing it may be noted that in the British Labour Party—alone among the Socialist parties of the world—the Jewish intellectual is almost unknown. The only prominent Jewish politician, a member of the MacDonald Cabinet, apart from a professor whose associations are only indirectly political, is a trade union leader and former East End tailor. The political, economic and social life of Great Britain has for more than a hundred years afforded the Jew every possibility of advancement and introduction into the ruling class and thus eliminated his inevitable identification with proletarian interests. In addition to this, the peculiar Jewish intellectual characteristics, in so far as they exist, provide a valuable substitute for many an Anglo-Saxon shortcoming. The demand for these specifically Jewish abilities in the City and in industry (remarkably enough not in journalism) leads to a steady absorption of that type of Jewish intellectual proletarian from whom on the Continent and especially in Russia was formed the major body of Socialist intellectuals.

In England it was possible for a Disraeli to rise to be a Conservative Prime Minister while his contem-

porary, Ferdinand Lassalle, became one of the founders of the German Labour movement, and this although his Conservative instincts were no whit less urgent than those of Disraeli nor, perhaps, his social ambitions. It is, then, not altogether inexplicable to find in the Conservative, and especially in the Liberal Party, a type of Jewish politician, for the most part ennobled who is completely assimilated by the ruling class. Of this class Lord Melchett is representative and also, a little more sympathetically, Lord Reading. Physical circumstances in England have not led educated Jewry into the Socialist fold as in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, there is another and no less weighty reason: the Marxist character of European Socialism has always had an especial attraction for the Jewish love of clear intellectual decision and purely logical construction; the undogmatic and vague character of British Socialism, with its aspirations towards justice and its trust in instinct, must of necessity remain *terra incognita* to the Jewish intellect. British Socialism has been spared many Talmudic discussions of a purely theoretic nature, and those disquisitions on dogma which on the Continent find expression in perpetual " tendency " disputes. Crises in English Socialism arise always from tactics and never from theory.

It is not intended here to analyse the subjective motives that have led certain members of the aristocracy to transfer their affection to Labour: suffice it to say that these may not always have been purely idealist; rather, shall we say, a certain personal vanity that felt itself circumscribed and frustrated within the older parties, unfulfilled ambition or political adventurousness may all have played their part, not to mention what Trotsky has termed " the attraction of power."

It would, however, be unjust to judge the problem on the personal merits or demerits of these few. The motives mentioned above may either consciously or unconsciously influence these men in their profession of Socialist faith, but they provide no satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon. Those who are really representative have entered the Labour Party as a body for reasons which cannot be egoistic. The majority have been keenly aware of the injustice of the present system of ownership and distribution of power, and have been imbued with the chivalrous wish to help the underdog, to aid the weak in their struggle against the powerful and mighty. This impulse has ever found individual champions in the British ruling class, and has always been an honourable tradition among a small minority. This, together with that aspect of the national character,

a readiness for compromise that is almost second nature, explains much in the history of Great Britain that must otherwise remain a mystery. Neither the history of Great Britain itself, nor the reception accorded to these aristocratic converts on their admission to the Labour Party, can be grasped if these factors are overlooked. Possibly if the impulse is regarded objectively there is a certain amount of patronage that could be detected in this impulse: a variation on the theme of " Ich Dien " which serves the Prince of Wales for his motto—a last survival of the feudal outlook. It would be interesting not only to examine the connection between the Labour Party and Liberal Radicalism, to whose inheritance the Labour Party has succeeded, but also to inspect the paths that lead from British Conservatism to British Socialism. But more important still is to try and visualise what the English working-class itself sees in this accession of unaccustomed aristocratic strength. There is here a definite contrast with the Continental attitude. The party statutes on the Continent preclude any outsiders or recruits such as these from any effective participation in the party councils and policy. To obtain a nomination to the party conference three years' ordinary membership must be served; a parliamentary candidate must have five years' organised service in the German

Social Democratic Party. Further he must overcome mistrust and endure slights, be jealously supervised and often deliberately superseded. This has for result that certain men of strong personality with Socialistic tendencies either fail to find their way into the party ranks, or, because of the obstacles that are set them, are forced to leave them. Often only the weakest personalities have the necessary patience and desire to pursue their humble way in the Continental parties, a fact which their present weak leadership reflects to a certain extent. In the years 1918 and 1919 this was clearly visible. The sudden overthrow of the monarchy, and with it the revelation of the hollowness of all that it had before made sacred, led thousands of capable men from the middle and upper classes into the Social Democratic Party, thus opening up the world of Socialist thought to all. No use was made of them, nor was any attempt made to consolidate their loyalty by making them delegates and M.P.'s. Party traditions were too rigid to adapt themselves to this new situation with any effectiveness. Continental Socialism frittered away its one and only great opportunity, and in so doing suffered its greatest defeat.

In contrast with Germany, in England the party machinery and the affection of the rank and file

were tendered them with every cordiality. All technical difficulties that lay in their path were smoothed and—or so it appeared to the foreigner—candidatures were offered them with an excessive timidity and a timid excessiveness. Compared with the Continent, they met with no obstacles. In the circumstances the lack of opportunity for the young and rising man in the Labour Party stated for a fact by a young Conservative in *The Times* correspondence columns seems highly improbable.

A variety of motives have led to their acceptance on the part of the workers themselves. In Great Britain, more than in any other country, there is a strong element of what might be termed proletarian snobbery. The number of workers, organised in trade unions and owing political allegiance to the Labour Party, who feel themselves rather flattered by the presence of members of the ruling class in their midst must run into hundreds of thousands. A certain amount of moral responsibility for this lies at the door of the yellow and illustrated press circulating in millions among the working-class, which has aroused this condition of mind by its insistence on interest in its columns of society gossip and twaddle. For the foreigner the columns devoted to this form of social activity even among papers with an exclusively working-class and petty

bourgeois circulation is a thing calculated to arouse astonishment. And especially as to him it must appear that they are not concerned with the doings of the real aristocracy but with the vulgarities of the plutocracy. Into this category falls the extreme interest and excitement which the nuptials of high society seem to arouse among the masses. The spectacle presented by a queue, formed almost exclusively of working-class women, braving wind and rain to catch a glimpse of bride and bridegroom as they emerge from the portals of a West End church and enhancing the glamour of a rather ridiculous parade of vanity, is among the most peculiar that ever strikes the foreigner in London. It must ever remain for him impossible to reconcile the great measure of self-respect possessed by the British working-class, a self-respect which cannot fail to strike him, with this tenderly wistful interest in the vacuous doings of the upper ten thousand.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there were similar phenomena to be observed on the Continent. In Vienna, for instance, the proletariat took tremendous interest, not in the marriages, but in the funerals of the great ones of the earth. The arrival of the Socialist parties, their powerful press and their ceaseless propaganda, at last knocked the

shamefulness and ridiculousness of this attitude into the heads of the working-class and actually made their realisation of it the touchstone of their proletarian culture. Possibly the continued existence of this proletarian snobbery in England is due to the fact that there is no clear dividing line between the mental and spiritual outlook of the working-class and the bourgeoisie, a division rendered a matter of course to the workers on the Continent by Marxist teaching. On the Continent any worker showing interest in the social round would be certain to be found in a non-socialist party. In England loyalty to the Labour Party has nothing to do with these reactions and display, if at least unconscious, of lack of class pride.

This state of mind, however interesting a phenomenon to the foreign observer, is no more a decisive factor in the fate of the upper class members of the Labour Party than is their egotistic motive. Far more important is the degree of class trust aroused by the " under-dog " tradition observed by a certain section of the ruling class in a way impossible in any other country outside England. This trust is extended far more definitely and spontaneously to the recruits from the landed aristocracy than to those from the industrial capitalist class. The British working-class trust the country gentle-

man far more than the descendant of the manufacturing capitalist, but even these latter have affinities which would be unthinkable on the Continent. In many cases personal animosities have been tempered by worship at the same chapel. Nonconformity has often given worker and master a common interest; the Anglican Church until recent times was too representative of the ruling class to form a basis for mutual trust. The worker worshipping in the same dissenting chapel with the pious son of a Nonconformist manufacturing family, avowing the same strict puritanism and seeing in his master's home the same moral discipline and way of life that material necessity imposed upon his own, felt bound to him by spiritual ties whose strength must not be underestimated. The Quakers, alone among the capitalists of the world, have succeeded in observing a "double loyalty"—loyalty to their own immediate interests and to the interests of their workers. And it must not be forgotten that a great part of the lack of a social revolutionary impulse in the British working-class during the last fifty years has only been made possible by the tact of the ruling class. Their higher standard of life, their luxuries have never been flaunted in the faces of the working-class as in many Continental countries. Here are meant the real upper and middle-class and not

certain of the *nouveaux riches*, whose extravagant vulgarity vies with that of any ruling class in Europe. The manufacturers of Bradford, for decades the " millionaire " city of England, during the last half of the nineteenth century, lived as modestly as their " hands " and avoided any parade of pomp or circumstance that might serve to rouse and wound their local workers. And this was not due to mere cant and hypocrisy as Continental critics are pleased to imagine, but had its origin in a real discipline; the " millionaires " of Bradford preferred to abjure luxury rather than challenge the poverty of their workers. The tact of the English propertied classes is as much responsible for the ineffectiveness of the class-struggle theory in England as the extravagance and profligacy and lack of any human fellow-feeling with the worker among the Russian aristocracy and upper classes before the war for the cruelties and atrocities of the Bolshevik revolution.

Judging the phenomenon of middle and upper class converts to Labour as a whole, it must not be forgotten that the Labour Party is following an old tradition. Contrary to Continental usage, change of party in England, even though the selfish motive be but thinly veiled, has never been regarded as immoral. The interlopers, not only those whose idealist motives could not be misinterpreted but

even the praetorians with fingers itching for the fattest plum, met with a certain amount of consideration on entering the Party. The British worker believes to have learned from the history of centuries that he may expect no less valuable service for his cause from the careerist than from the just and upright. The careerist is no new phenomenon in English politics. Since the time of the notorious "Gentleman Wilkes" who, in spite of his doubtful character, rendered unquestionable service to the lowest classes, they have flourished in dozens. Disraeli is not the least among them, nor is Lord Birkenhead, a man whose abilities seem ridiculously overrated in England. All these careerists and political adventurers having given valuable service to Empire, Great Britain and their parties, the English are not inclined to inquire too closely into motives. Here, as in other aspects of political life, the Labour Party is following an old tradition.

In addition to a general respect of the upper classes, a whole series of impulses and motives accounts for the hearty welcome accorded these newcomers by the Party. A desire for fresh blood (one wholly foreign to the rapidly stagnating Continental movement) ensured them rapid popularity. This may be taken as the expression of the healthy instinct of a healthy organism seeking an antidote

against the dangers of autoparalysis and the conviction that these men possess qualities indispensable in the present phase of the Party's development. It feels—of course never consciously in the mass of members—that with the rise of the Party to place as official Opposition and alternative government a new type of official is necessary for certain new functions in place of the agitator and organiser within the party. It is the conviction that proletarian conditions within a dominant capitalist society are not fitted or likely to produce the administrator, the "governing" type, capable of thought and action on a grand scale. Their presence at the political and diplomatic helm serve to increase confidence and raise the Party's prestige.

But perhaps the decisive factor was that which urged it in the present phase, where Labour finds itself confronted for the first time by the realities of government, to limit itself to secure first steps rather than embark upon unlimited experiment with unskilled hands. The psychological processes of the Labour Party, directing its energies to the point immediately attainable, find here their full reflection and contrast to the Continental Labour movement.

The alternatives facing both movements were exactly the same—either to surmount the situation with leaders of their own class, with men whose

abilities, apart from the leaders of the great trade unions, had only been proved within narrow limits or to promote the newcomers to immediate leadership regardless of length of party service.

These alternatives automatically confront any Labour movement on its rise to parliamentary power. Alone in the world and without any hesitation, the British Labour Party chose the latter; and this the more surprisingly as no other movement is so heavily laden with trade union influence, usually inimical to the intellectual. In contrast to their Continental colleagues, the British workers feel that it is more advantageous for Socialism's fate in this decade to make use of men born with an understanding of tradition and a ruthless will to power than to limit their choice to men of their own class who have not had the advantages of education in the ruling class.

This point of view was easily discernible in the 1928 Birmingham Conference, where not only were two newcomers elected to the Party Executive but the entire discussion on foreign politics given over to their speeches. For the foreigner accustomed to an executive's animosity displayed to any interloper who has not twenty-five years' party service, this debate was astonishing. George Lansbury, the old class warrior and most endearing figure among all

the English Left and by whose side a man like Cook cuts a pitiful figure—it was Lansbury himself who gave the Mosleys, Kenworthys, Bakers and Wedgwood Benns free rein. The old champion of the British working-class and of society's outcasts let these men take the field in a body as though he, and with him the whole conference, wished to show England that Liberalism and Conservatism had no longer the sole monopoly of Oxford and Cambridge men.

Generally speaking the moment was favourable for their reception; technical and organisational considerations gave them added favour. The weakness of party organisation pointed out in the previous chapter, its character as a depot for the collection of election funds, permitted the passing over of local officials and organisers. The local bodies in the constituencies were allowed wide scope in their choice of candidates, and here again tradition played its important part. And here again a tradition that the Labour Party has taken over from the capitalist parties without hesitation: the sole aim of local Liberal and Conservative parties was to win the local seat for their candidate; his party loyalty and reliability were in these circumstances secondary considerations. To ensure winning the seat all efforts were made to secure some national figure as

candidate or, failing this, one who in addition to personal charm was possessed of either title, rank or money. Especially desirable was one who possessed a combination of all three.

It cannot be denied that the Labour Party has followed the tradition with all fidelity, and in doing so was not disturbed by any feeling of disaccord with its most sacred principles or aims. Money, rank and title in addition to personal service have been determining factors in the choice of the party's candidates. In dozens of cases constituencies have been allotted to such men or women who declared themselves ready to finance their own election costs either wholly or partially. In practice therefore a plutocratic element has crept into the party, a state of affairs that could neither exist nor be tolerated in any other Socialist party. By passing over members of the working-class in this manner we find a whole series of men and women of the middle-class and aristocracy representing the Labour Party in the House of Commons. This state of affairs must astound every Continental Socialist, and the more so when he finds the party headquarters, because of the relief given to the Party funds, apparently lending the practice tacit approval. But neither can it be said that the men and women elected in this manner have in any way brought dishonour upon

the Socialist movement in Great Britain. Indeed, among them are to be found the most influential among the younger leaders.

Paradoxically enough this practice of personally financing election contests is due to the trade union's custom of supplying funds for its own candidates in order to strengthen its influence in the parliamentary party. With logic peculiar enough it is felt that what has been allowed the trade unions without question for more than twenty years cannot be denied the individual. Similar circumstances on the Continent, and especially in Central Europe, are unthinkable. The rank and file would see in it every sign and proof of a dishonoured corruption and would flock *en masse* to the Communist Party as answer to their betrayal. In the one case known to me in Germany, the mere attempt led to the ignominious cancellation of a sure and certain candidature and the close of a political career.

It cannot in the scope of this small volume be touched upon how nearly these recruits from the ruling class, of whom I take Sir Oswald Mosley as an outstanding personality, have influenced the party and affected its character for good or evil; or how far they have falsified it and introduced factors in its policy which should or must be foreign to it. Without entering into the controversy that rages

about them, I would say that far from these men having weakened the Socialist character of the movement, it is they who have given new life and impulse to the Socialist side of the agitation. For them, in contrast to those trade union leaders become sceptic, this newly discovered Socialism is not a remote ideal with scant connection with the day's routine, but a standpoint from which to judge every aspect of the daily economic and political struggle.

In the election struggle they have lent new glamour to the party. The personal attraction they possess for a most numerous electorate has gained votes and seats that must otherwise have fallen into enemy hands. They have psychologically facilitated and influenced the " petty-bourgeois " vote, in every country the most difficult to win for Socialism, in favour of Labour candidates by making the Labour Party " respectable." The very fact that men and women of a high social standing could stand as candidates on a Labour platform has led to electoral gains, and therefore to an increase of political power without the loss of the working-class vote.

On the other side an element of snobbery has been introduced which, if the portents are not deceptive, may in the next five years constitute one

of the most serious problems within the party. Were there the slightest possibility of a Communist expansion in Great Britain, here is the point which would afford them the most successful material for agitation. As long as the Labour Party does not abjure the monarchy and is prepared to tolerate the House of Lords as a political institution, thus giving tacit approval to hereditary social distinctions, it cannot well fight against the attractive advantage conferred by titles, rank and social qualifications possessed by its own party members. It would place itself in a position contrary to its actual political practice.

At the present moment only a provisional balance can be struck, and one which is temporarily to the credit of its aristocratic converts. At the moment everything is in a state of flux; it cannot exactly be foreseen to what extent they will be assimilated by the Party or to what extent they will change the Party. However serious a problem they may become in the future, to-day they are the outward sign that the future of Great Britain lies in Labour's hands. They are the heralds in the battle whose fanfare, Labour believes, announces the worker's victory.

Chapter IV

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

i: THE MAXTON-COOK CAMPAIGN (A STUDY IN FALSE EXTREMISM)

> We can no longer stand by and see thirty years of devoted work betrayed in making peace with capitalism and compromises with the political philosophy of our capitalist opponents.

THIS is a characteristic sentence from the manifesto which, published over the joint signatures of James Maxton, Chairman of the I.L.P., and A. J. Cook, General Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain [*New Leader*, June 22nd, 1928], gave sudden surprise to the British public. It announced a joint campaign of the two leaders of the "left wing" of the Labour Party and the trade unions.

> In furtherance of our efforts, we propose to combine in carrying through a series of conferences and meetings in various parts of the country; the rank and file will be given the opportunity to state whether they accept the new outlook or whether they wish to remain true to the spirit and ideals which animated the early pioneers. Conditions have not changed. . . .

The manifesto ended with an appeal to the working-class to close their ranks in the fight against an economic system in which riches and luxury must ever flaunt themselves in glaring contrast to abject poverty.

The Maxton-Cook combination was a surprise not merely for those outside the Labour movement. It is true that both men shared a common weakness for rhetorical effects, a kind of religious fanaticism in their statements of conviction and a definite affection for sentimental policies. Both shared an exclusive and almost fanatical devotion to the cause of the working-class as they conceived it, but the difference in temperament and intellectual abilities, the difference in method and tactics hitherto employed by them did not lead to any expectation of successful co-operation.

Arthur Cook, the Miner's General Secretary, became a national figure as leader of the great coal struggle of 1926. He proved himself to be one of the least capable of leaders to be burdened with the tremendous responsibilities of an hour of crisis. The public has only glimpsed him against the spectacular background provided by the coal struggle and the general strike, and has in consequence formed an opinion of him utterly at variance with the real facts. The tremendous social conflicts

with which he was indissolubly connected threw him into glamorous relief for some and into grotesque shadow for others. His friends and those of his enemies who know him intimately are fully aware that the proportions assumed by Arthur Cook in the years of crisis are in grotesque disproportion to his real stature. His winning simplicity and dynamic energy in mob oratory give on first impression a sense of transparent simplicity which helped to create the "Cook legend." But for all the violence of his invective he is a weak man, and he is weak because he is without consistency of conviction. Intellectually far below the level of the average miners' agent, he was early fascinated with the half-baked Marxism he picked up at Labour College classes, and, mixing the Communist dialect with that of the Nonconformist evangelical preacher, he became a powerful propagandist. He is a man of words not deeds. His vanity was played on by the flattery of the Left, and he fell an easy, though not a wholly consistent, prey to the influence of more logical minds. The hand of his Communist mentors appeared most distinctly in the publications under his name. His recent career, his vacillations first to the left, then to the right, first towards the Communists, now in open opposition to them, have shown that to attribute to him machiavellian pur-

pose was grossly to flatter a rhetorician quite lacking in intellectual discipline. For a short space of time he seemed to wear the mantle of the prophet of revolution, but he is not of the stuff of which martyrs—or even political architects—are made.

This " disciple of Lenin," as he once in a moment's weakness termed himself, has never understood Lenin. Not only to attempt to compare him with Lenin but to depict him as the stronger disruptive force because for a time " he was able to hold up the greatest Empire in the world, a victorious, peaceful and, compared with Russia, a country of boundless prosperity," shows a lack of instinct and perception of human and historic values and events that is but poor tribute to Lord Birkenhead's belauded " first-class brain." The coal struggle and the general strike are no more to be compared with the Bolshevik revolution, either in immediate form or historic significance than autumn manœuvres with the Battle of the Marne. Cook was thrown up in the upheaval of 1926; Lenin was the Bolshevik revolution. Lenin was a man of dynamic energy and determination such as the world has not seen since Napoleon. Cook was a faulty instrument to which fate gave a momentary historic significance that he might the more readily be forgotten.

James Maxton is made of other stuff. Like Stanley Baldwin, with whom otherwise he has very little in common, he appears to both friends and public to be far more simple than he really is. He is a man whose personal honour and integrity cannot be doubted for a moment, nor can his unquestioning readiness to die on the barricades for the socialist cause. More than this and rarer than this—Maxton is prepared to live for Socialism, and for Socialism alone. So acutely is he possessed by Socialism, so completely has he subjected his private life to the service of his Socialist mission that he does not regard this as a sacrifice. He is utterly without snobbery, although not entirely free from vanity; he is immune to all the attractions that a comfortable care-free life can offer. Maxton is a man of great and trained intelligence, even though it runs along a single track and is subject to strong emotional impulses. But he lacks application—sticking power. He has a gift of humour rare in the fanatic and so remains endeared even to his opponents.

In Maxton we have a man whose personal integrity could never be questioned even by his few personal enemies—an *anima candida* among the world's parliamentarians.

When he walks the world and preaches Socialism, a millenary Socialism to be fulfilled in our time,

like some early Christian apostle, he can feel in his soul no conflict with his faith. But yet he is well aware that a full Socialism is unrealisable in our sinful generation. Thus the multitude to whom he preaches imagine a vain thing—in their tens of thousands they await hourly the proclamation of the kingdom of God on earth.

In private, Maxton might justify this contradiction between will and reality by retorting that without this illusion the Socialist movement can have no present reality, nor the masses present impulse to give it future reality, that it is necessary to fill the hopeless void of the worker's life under capitalism with this great and tangible hope.

But viewed objectively, this form of propaganda approximates very dangerously to a " great illusion." It is in effect a betrayal of the masses and a real danger to the practical work of the Labour Party, whose day-to-day policy and actions must of necessity appear as a " betrayal of the cause " when compared with these sweet words. The Maxtons of Socialism—and they are common to all left wing parties, even though they appear in less attractive form—are responsible for most of the outbreaks of the " betrayal complex " that afflict the Socialist workers. They are a serious danger to any movement which gives them position and influence.

The joint action undertaken by Cook and Maxton was for thef ormer nothing more than a new link in a whole chain of agitation designed to smash the joint councils of the Mond-group employers and the trade unions. To Maxton, although a personal breach of discipline and that not the first, the manifesto had greater significance. It was a measure born of desperation—a confession of the Chairman of the I.L.P. that all the pronouncements of the I.L.P. executive issued under his own leadership were futile and hopeless. He was appealing to the masses over the heads of his own organisation.

In essentials, the campaign can be said to represent an attempt to rally those left-wingers discouraged and rendered powerless by the collapse of the "militant" trade union policy and the success of Labour Party "reformism." They were to be rallied round a new standard, which would lead the whole movement anew towards Socialist and revolutionary objectives. Viewed as an attempt to unite the left wing, a task in which both the Communist Party and the I.L.P. had failed, and to take over the leadership of the party in the name of the revolutionary cause, the campaign has a symptomatic importance far greater than its actual repercussions. It is here examined, not for its own sake but because of the

light it throws on the fate of revolutionary movements in Great Britain.

This was the essential meaning of the movement. The origins of the strange alliance are more obscure. The plot seems to have been hatched in Glasgow by some of the Clydeside Socialists as a revolt against the restraints of the parliamentary party's discipline; Mr. Wheatley's association with the movement was probably more significant than appeared on the surface. Cook and Maxton were marked out as the leaders because they were presumed to be the two men in the Labour movement who had power over the masses, who commanded popular affection, and who were above suspicion of self-seeking. That Cook and Maxton should so hastily have fallen in with the scheme (its flotation was the work of a few days) was a revelation of their vanity, and did small credit to their political sense. Once the movement was launched, and its leaders had been enlisted, it had to work up some sort of theoretical justification for itself.

Several months passed before the two leaders of the new movement decided to present their case, the reason and aims of the new campaign, in a pamphlet entitled, " Our case for a Socialist Revival."

It begins with the statement that " capitalism

has failed to utilise in a rational fashion the great forces of wealth production which science and invention have placed at its disposal." To-day " the accumulated wealth at the disposal of the capitalist class for new investment is passing by the depressed industries, which still employ a considerable proportion of our working population, and is going into luxury stores, greyhound racing and super-cinemas and into investments in colonial countries where labour is cheap and high profits are the rule. The failure of capitalism makes it more necessary than ever that we should press forward our Socialist alternative to capitalism . . . the practice of the British Labour movement shows the gradual abandonment of Socialist activity." The pamphlet holds the permeation of the movement by capitalist ideas responsible for this state of affairs, and quotes three specific instances—" the Mondist policy of the Trades Union General Council, the new programme of the Labour Party, and the measures of intimidation and suppression of those within the Labour movement who are opposing these policies."

The Maxton-Cook alternatives to this policy are a queer mixture of self-evident demands to which any Socialist would subscribe but which hardly lie within the province of the immediately attainable, of half-truths and downright errors, tendencies

towards communist theory, demagogy and statements having their origin in an astounding ignorance of the facts.

The twin evangelists demand as an alternative to current trade union policy, whose subservience to Labour Party policy has caused them much aching of heart and scratching of head, that the Mond-Turner policy be liquidated and that the General Council " take up the question of unity with Russian, Norwegian and Finnish trade-union movements for the purpose of inaugurating a world-wide campaign for the establishment of international trade union unity."

The Labour Party is advised to substitute for its present policy of Liberalist palliation " the rapid socialisation of industry," and this on a basis of " no compensation except in specific cases of hardship "; the big multiple stores are to be expropriated, the main government departments to be staffed with consistent Socialists, and the monarchy and House of Lords to be abolished. Further demands include dissolution of the Empire, preparation of the whole working-class for mass resistance and mass struggle against capitalist governments in the event of war breaking out, refusal of war credits and support of the Russian disarmament proposals.

It is fairly evident that the new Maxton-Cook

plat is a product of a mixed Socialist and Communist *cuisine*. Viewing it prompts the question whether their extraordinary *naïveté* is responsible for the belief that these projects are realisable within a democracy or whether the *naïveté* is a convenient mask until a favourable opportunity should arise for the relegation of democracy in favour of Moscow methods, even though they be tricked out in British guise.

In this lack of clarity with regard to decisive points and the feasibility of their plans is revealed the whole weakness of their ideas. And it further demonstrates a point of fundamental interest observed by moderate Socialist and Bolshevist alike—that between reformism and Bolshevism there is no other possible alternative. Between these two the Socialist must make his choice; herein lies the reason for the weakness of all bona fide non-Communist left groups of the world Socialist movement.

In addition to opposing the Mond Conferences and the Labour Party programme, the Maxton-Cook campaign was directed towards a third objective. It protested against the increasing curtailment of freedom of speech and thought within the movement. To quote the pamphlet again—" it is becoming increasingly difficult to oppose the drift away from a Socialist policy in either the Trade Union

movement or the Labour Party without being accused of disruption. A psychology is being deliberately created that to openly criticise official Labour policy is to damage the movement. Throughout the whole movement is a spread of intolerance."

It is true to a certain extent that the tendencies complained of constitute a serious problem for the Labour Party. But it is also true that the total disregard shown by Labour's general staff towards the declaration of war made upon them by the two Labour leaders, one which in any other country would have been answered by immediate expulsion, sheds a significant light on the complaint of heresy-hunting and increasing intolerance. Neither Cook nor Maxton was subjected to disciplinary measures on account of the campaign. The I.L.P., in fear of schism, gave nervous support to its head, who had done it the ill turn of launching the campaign without consulting his followers. But the leaders of the Labour Party contented themselves for the most part with contemptuous silence. The Miners' Federation, though unsympathetic to the political vagaries of its secretary, put no close restraint on his activities. The revolt's cold reception proved that the limitations on freedom of opinion within the party are by no means so sharp as Cook and Maxton imagined. Whatever ill-will they incurred was only

to be expected from the manner in which they acted.

The British political labour movement's rise is synonymous with freedom of thought and speech. Indeed for a long period the main charge levelled by individual Socialists against the Liberals and Conservatives was the restraint on freedom of opinion within their ranks. But even apart from this, the composition of the Labour Party was of such heterogeneous character that an unusual measure of personal liberty was both offered to and exercised by its members. This individualism, which distinguished the party from any other Socialist body in the world, is now doomed—not, as Cook and Maxton appear to hold, because of a systematic onslaught on individual liberty of opinion, but because the party is now in that stage of development where extreme individualism threatens a serious danger.

Inner conflict of opinion is a sign of health and strength and " especially," to quote Philip Snowden, " in a party which has not yet been taught the need for unity and solidarity by the responsibilities of power." To-day, when the Labour Party can be regarded permanently as a potential government, a far greater restraint must be imposed upon all public statements, and the demand made upon members and

above all upon leaders that they avoid any occasion that might be used by opponents as a weapon against the party. As an alternative government the party has, as it were, entered into another dimension where other laws of perspective and acoustics must operate. Discipline, suppression of any weakness for "solo stunts," and subordination to official party opinion must be taken as matter of course necessities. Those who consider the enormous measure of individual liberty accorded within the party as its greatest attraction may regret its disappearance; but unless some limits are observed the party may well be impeded in the fulfilment of its social and political mission.

The fate that attended the crusade for a Socialist revival is significant enough. The applause that greeted the crusaders in their series of mass meetings in the provinces was non-committal. The conferences of the rank and file announced in the June manifesto never took place. The Communists offered their support on impossible conditions. The I.L.P. tried to harness the movement to its own chariot. But from no quarter was there genuine warmth of response. The failure of the campaign to touch any sympathetic chords merely served to expose the inward and outward weaknesses of the extremism in the British Labour movement.

In the trade unions, rendered instinctively chary of extremism since the lessons of the 1926 general strike, Cook found no support worthy of mention. Against this Maxton may have derived some moral satisfaction from the sympathy met with among his friends from the Clyde, David Kirkwood and John Wheatley, and from the half-hearted majority resolution of the I.L.P. Executive.

The Mond-Turner conferences pursued their way undisturbed, and were approved by enormous majorities, not only at the 1928 Trade Union Congress, held at Swansea, but also at the annual conferences of all the great trade unions. It stands as an ironic comment on all false extremism (and by this I mean an extremism not dictated by external and internal necessity) that it was the Cook-Maxton opposition which first helped the by no means popular co-operation policy of the Trade Union General Council to such an unexpectedly large majority, and gave a really vital impulse to the discussions themselves.

The fight against the Labour Party programme proved itself no whit less ineffective. The pamphlet already quoted states: " We believe, however, that we have said sufficient to convince every consistent Socialist of the necessity of working to secure the defeat of the new Labour Party programme at the

annual conference and to secure a declaration by the Conference in favour of a militant Socialist programme declaring war against capitalism." The adoption or rejection of the programme was here evidenced as the touchstone of the whole campaign's success and as the sole justification for its existence. At the Birmingham Conference, James Maxton was given a last opportunity to win over the elected delegates of the working-class to his standpoint. It offered that opportunity so rare in a politician's life when the success or failure of a cherished scheme and the fate of a political career hang on a single speech. The leader of the opposition proved unequal to the occasion. He allowed himself to be whirled buoyantly along on a flood of rhetoric and seemed half-way to reconcile himself to certain failure with a light heart. The Birmingham conference did not even take a vote on the Maxton alternatives. The attempt to wreck the programme ended in a dramatic collapse of all these fond hopes. The conference, determined at all costs to avoid any sign of disunity that might lead political opponents to doubt its will to victory, approved the original proposals without any vital alteration.

The Maxton-Cook campaign met with utter rout on every important point. The whole action which, both in Great Britain and abroad, had been

regarded as the beginning of serious confusion within the party, and even as the signal for a split in the ranks, suffered political death. Once again the rank and file of British workers showed that they possess a finer instinct for the ideas destined to survival and a far keener realisation of realities than the " left leaders." And this despite the fact that " left leaders " consider themselves *par excellence* the " men in touch with masses."

ii: NEW LEADERS AND OLD

However great may be the differences between the Continental and British Socialist movements in first principles, programme and organisation, the difference between a Marxist and non-Marxist party is nowhere so clearly and significantly revealed as in the attitude towards the individual leader. The current materialist conception of history leaves but a small role for the individual in historical evolution. In Marxism the individual is the instrument of given tendencies, an assistant at the historical revolutionary spectacle, but never the subject of history. The method of Marxist Socialist practice has been determined by this theory. Consciously or unconsciously, it has fought against the emergence of any strong personality from its ranks

and condemned any personal cult as a thing unworthy.

This party tradition is reflected most grotesquely in the columns of the German party press, which represents with its one hundred and ninety-six dailies a considerable political force. Any personal mention whether in praise or blame is considered bad form, and it requires a sixtieth birthday or the anniversary of a death for the ban to be lifted. The German leader, unless as in the case of Bebel he is lifted out of the ruck by force of special circumstance, goes his way unloved, a great and far too great part of his work must remain anonymous, and he can almost never know the happiness that comes of recognition of personal achievement. In this respect the German movement rejects one of the strongest links that can bind leaders and masses, and a source of strength from which the British movement has ever drawn its greatest inspiration.

How different in Great Britain! Here, hemmed in by no rigidity of principle and tradition, the cult of the individual leader knows no limits. Continental Socialism tends to regard its leaders as abstract facts, whose personal life holds not a shred of interest. The British Labour movement weaves legend and anecdote about its leaders and exploits their " human all too human " aspect to bring them closer to the

masses. To the Continental Socialist the party is an idea, a community, an organisation. To the British Socialist it is—MacDonald or Maxton or the local Labour candidate. Instead of loyalty to that almost metaphysical concept—the movement—we often find in England a personal loyalty to the individual leader. It need not be stressed what measure of power and strength the British party draws from this source, one which on the Continent lies untapped.

This is but one factor responsible for the development of personality in British labour. In close connection with it is the influence exercised by the varying fundamental outlook of the two movements on their leaders. The Marxian theory of Continental Socialism has for decades (by its obligation on the individual member to pay homage to Marxism) pinned him down to a dogma; and this dogma is an article of faith. Like the religious dogma of the devout Catholic, it tends to obtrude between his person and reality. Marxist Socialism has imposed narrow limits on personal freedom of opinion and tended to produce a standard type of Labour leader. The British movement, wholly immune from this spiritual militarism, has accorded its active spirits a far greater measure of spiritual liberty and individual development. Continental Socialist dogma

with its exclusiveness and restriction of private judgment, has excluded from its ranks a certain type of man both able and valuable politically, and thus robbed itself of excellent material for leadership. The greater freedom within the British Labour movement has made available a wide range of personality from which to choose its leaders.

From a purely intellectual viewpoint the British Labour leader may lag behind his Continental colleague, but to the foreign observer there is ample compensation in the former's greater humanity, his greater measure of vitality and unlimited adaptability.

That the British leader can become flesh and blood to hundreds of thousands instead of dragging out a half anonymous existence in the party ghetto is not only due to the different attitude of the party and to his different position in the party machinery. Before all and in complete contrast to the Continent it is due to the attitude of the great London and provincial newspapers. Ramsay MacDonald has on many occasions delivered himself with ill-concealed bitterness on the unfair treatment received by the Labour Party in the columns of the daily press. It is, of course, true that the sporting fairness of the British press is overestimated on the Continent. Although more restrained in tone and not

so exuberant in polemic, nevertheless in critical situations the British press can protect and defend the class interests of the bourgeoisie with a devotion in peculiar contradiction to its steady denial of the existence of class interests. The exploitation of the Zinoviev letter against the Labour Party in the 1924 Election is proof that, at least among part of the much admired English press, party instincts are just as strong as on the Continent, and that in times of emergency it can use any means to gain the desired end.

But so far as concerns the treatment accorded to individuals in the Labour Party, the attitude of the great Liberal and Conservative dailies must arouse lively envy in the Continental politician. With a few honourable exceptions, the German bourgeois press exercises a kind of " conspiracy of silence " towards the leaders of the Social Democratic Party. This rule is broken, unless the politician in question is actually a member of the Cabinet, only to attack him; and the lack of any strict libel laws, as in Great Britain, allows a measure of vilification and calumny unthinkable in Anglo-Saxon countries.

These tactics are pursued not only in that semi-private sphere from which the British press draws material for its gossip columns, and in lighter parliamentary articles, but follow the German Labour

leader in his immediate political activities. It is the consistent practice of the Central European daily press, tied strictly to party, merely to indicate that an opposition leader has delivered a speech, but rarely to publish its contents in a full or satisfactory form. For the Continental therefore it is a matter of envious admiration that even the political enmity of a die-hard "daily" does not prevent it giving support to the individual Bills and Motions of Socialist parliamentarians, provided that these are in general agreement with their aims.

The British practice, noted a short time ago by the excellent London correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Rudolf Kircher, of giving public men "a leg-up," in contradistinction to Continental practice, has on the whole been continued towards the Labour Party. And when, in addition, it is considered that the British press often places highly-paid space at the disposal of Labour leaders, and that even a newspaper such as the *Morning Post* will commission a whole series of articles from Socialist leaders on their party aims, little wonder that Socialist leaders abroad view the situation in England as they might some dream of a nobler and better world.

The greater publicity given the British Labour leader, the ridiculously small importance of the

party organisation itself, and the larger measure of individual freedom, all these, combined with other factors, make political reputations in the British Labour movement easier to gain—and easier to lose—than on the Continent. These fluctuations in political reputation possess some uncanny quality; only in rare cases are they fully capable of rational explanation. It is true that they are always accompanied by some external sign. The Wheatley lawsuit, the propaganda for the refusal of individual military service carried on by Arthur Ponsonby, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs under Ramsay MacDonald, were the outward signs of the turning point in their respective careers. But these external events represent more the garment and the pretext than the true cause of their eclipse. The real causes lie much deeper. They are not to be found in a good or a bad speech in an important crisis, not in any movement of the party left or right, leaving the leader high and dry, and to-day, not even in scandal. It is as though suddenly the personal radiance of the leader grows or diminishes, as though a secret flaw had become apparent or an unsuspected power become visible. The true causes lie beyond analysis and on the threshold of political mysticism.

While in Germany the strict loyalty of the party

press, the rigid block-voting of all parties in Parliament, the more exacting discipline within the party framework, and electoral voting by lists and not by individuals produce a stabilised leadership, in Great Britain everything is in a perpetual state of fluctuation. The political evolution of Great Britain, so far as personalities are concerned, has always been characterised by this mobility. The Labour Party has a full share of this tradition, which adds sanity and vigour to the whole of political life.

Any survey of leaders of the Labour Party must begin with Ramsay MacDonald, not only for his position and place in history as first Labour Prime Minister, but for his personality as an individual. Since the deaths of Bebel, the pre-war leader of German Social-Democracy, of Jean Jaurès, the French leader, of Victor Adler, the Austrian Socialist, and the Swedish Hjalmar Branting, he is beyond question the outstanding figure of International Socialism.

His position in England itself is peculiar. In those political circles in London where a goodly portion of political opinion is formed, his personal unpopularity is almost unexampled. His colleagues in the House and in Smith Square, the Party headquarters, complain of his inaccessibility, his de-

liberate isolation from those on whose loyalty and devotion the success of any future Labour Government depends, and of his schoolmasterish condescension, his hypersensitiveness and vanity. He moves to-day in a personal vacuum that is almost painful to behold. Those who have grouped themselves round him of late years are not always disinterested friends but often men and women who hope to see their loyalty solidly rewarded with Ministerial posts in the next Cabinet.

The unprejudiced foreign observer can regard him without sentiment or rancour. He can, without blinding himself to the obvious faults of an important figure, admire his cool mastery of parliamentary tactics. He will attribute to him personally most of the credit for the generous reception accorded by the Labour Party to its converts from the middle and upper classes. He will recognise that here—and this to the eternal glory of British Labour—is a man who in education is equal to the best of his contemporaries, in culture perhaps surpasses them. Whether he is a man of action is not yet finally known. The episode of the first Labour Government gave no basis for a final judgment. One can perhaps more readily picture him sitting and dreaming by his fireside or wandering with a knapsack on the moors alone with Nature.

In his general attitude towards life, he strikes anyone who crosses his path now as a Conservative. A strange play of historical forces has resulted in the curious fact that the temperaments of the three leaders, Ramsay MacDonald, Stanley Baldwin and Lloyd George seem to be at odds with their political views: the Socialist leader is essentially a Conservative; the Conservative leader is really a Liberal, and the Liberal leader, a typical Socialist.

After the inglorious fall of his Government, accompanied as it was by a whole series of *faux pas*, Ramsay MacDonald's future, crowed the wiseacres of London, was not worth a single cent. Yet he sits more firmly in the saddle than ever. His leadership was never less disputed than at the present moment. For this his ability to compromise and reconcile is beyond doubt responsible in part. The true reason, however, is to be sought outside the immediately political. In the imagination and consciousness of hundreds of thousands his position is beyond party politics. However little else he may resemble Lenin, this he has in common with the great Russian revolutionary—in the slums of the manufacturing town and in the hovels of the countryside he has become a legendary being—the personification of all that thousands of downtrodden men and women hope and dream and desire. Like Lenin, too, he is

the focus of the mute hopes of a whole class. Such reverence and such love in thousands of unknown hearts give him a power which is one of the weightiest factors in the world of political realities. This is the reason for his " come-back," and not anything he has said or done.

Anyone so deeply rooted in a nation's fantasy, despite an arrogance which is perhaps unconscious and an aloofness which is perhaps at bottom only shyness, can look forward to the evening of life with confidence and security.

Does Philip Snowden lack this " charisma," the divine grace that weaves legends about men? Or is it the physical fragility which overshadows his life that has prevented the masses kindling to his fire?

In any case, it is a fact that Philip Snowden seems to be perpetually condemned to walk in MacDonald's shadow. Mentally Snowden stands a head higher than the party leader. He is a political thinker of crystal clearness, though he may be without MacDonald's adaptability. In spite of his sarcasm, that biting irony which he wields like a shield between himself and the world, he is a man to whom a human sympathy can be turned without its freezing to ice. It is true life can hold much more tragedy for the politician than only to have achieved

the Chancellorship of Great Britain's exchequer; but none the less this ascetic figure, whose sarcasm but barely hides a warm and human heart, is more eloquent of tragedy than any other politician of the British left.

The railwaymen's leader, J. H. Thomas, and Arthur Henderson, the General Secretary of the Party and guardian of the Party tradition, stand next to MacDonald in the Labour hierarchy. Should MacDonald resign during the next five years these two representatives of the older generation, are possible leaders of the Party. Of these two " Jimmy " Thomas is the more picturesque, and is quite one of the queerest figures in the International Labour movement. He is British to the core, and is proud of his nationality to an extent a Continental leader would never dare to profess unless he were an all-round Chauvinist. He has created round him an atmosphere of vulgar cordiality and a hail-fellow-well-met manner which appears to have taken in the whole of the British Empire with the exception of about a dozen Communists. His pose is "healthy" commonsense, "healthy" moderation, and " healthy " progress. The somewhat vague idea of " national unity and national homogeneity" has found its living personification in this man and has at the same time run to absurd lengths.

" Jimmy " Thomas beyond doubt possesses the extremely rare quality of civil courage, the one extenuating feature in the character of this painful but disarming personality. In more than one instance Thomas was prepared to forfeit the sympathies of his colleagues and even his own position rather than act against his convictions. Without the least hesitation he declined the seat in the War Cabinet which was offered to him, and to his honour it may be said that, in spite of their opposite views on the War, he remained true and loyal to his friend, Ramsay MacDonald, throughout these difficult years.

In Great Britain laurels are generously bound round the head of this quinquagenarian by all his political opponents. Whenever Society wants to show its democratic feelings, this former engine-cleaner has to put in an appearance; no public banquet is complete without a speech delivered by J. H. Thomas, and Low—our only contemporary cartoonist of genius—never portrays him but in full evening dress. No tribute of the nations to the British constitution is complete without his signature, no organisation rising above party and condemning class warfare is conceivable without the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas among its honorary members.

The foreign observer, who perhaps has no means

of gauging a type like Thomas, must however confess that something in him rebels against this workmen's leader. Not because he sees in him a traitor—things are not quite so simple in political life as Bolshevist philosophy imagines. Thomas is by no means a traitor as far as his practical activities are concerned. On the contrary, it was due to his skilful handling that he succeeded in extracting the most favourable wages agreement for the railwaymen which has ever been granted by the capitalists to a privileged class of workers. If such a foreign observer resents this man, he does it because he somehow feels that here the vulgarity and the lack of social dignity and restraint of a parvenu have reached a point where, in Marxian terminology, quantity becomes quality and resentment on æsthetic grounds leads to a condemnation of the whole personality.

The role J. H. Thomas plays in Great Britain is a strange feature of modern politics. In any other country he would sit between two stools distrusted, perhaps even despised, by those of his own class as well as by his opponents. It may, of course, be that his rise to the status of a national figure is but another proof of the political genius of the British nation, of its ability to pick the right man and of its power to assimilate new types and classes. It may be that he is really the powerful link of Empire he

is so frequently said to be. Be this as it may, it might perhaps be better if, on æsthetic grounds alone, the rise of the British working classes were not symbolised for millions in just this man and his external habiliments.

The career of J. H. Thomas gives rise to reflections on one of the most interesting of contemporary problems of politics in the period of Labour's rise to power, a problem which by the way has been seen from a different but none the less interesting angle in Ernst Toller's play " Hoppla! Wir leben." It is one qualitatively different from the rise of the East Side newsboy to the White House, or from penniless immigrant to steel or film magnate. In the case of these men came the rise to wealth and power, and the necessary psychological adaptation followed as a matter of course. They fully approved the social and economic system that enabled them to rise. The will to social and economic power was the strongest impulse for their career. The worker who rises from obscurity to Cabinet rank often finds his new social prestige with its new way of life in contradiction with his inner convictions and personal tastes. Generally speaking, the dangers attending this situation are less in England than abroad. The preliminary years of parliamentary activity, carrying with them social and representative duties form

a slow process of adaptation to the new way of life. But considered fundamentally, the same occurs in England as on the Continent, even though there the greater gulf between the worker's and the Reichstag member's standard of life renders the transition more abrupt. On the one hand we find the trade union leader filling his new and exalted position with natural dignity, avoiding rather than seeking social duties and maintaining unaltered for himself and his family the old traditions and the old atmosphere of his previous social existence. On the other there is the Labour leader who is completely fascinated by the new and magic world so suddenly opened to him and in danger of losing his soul in the new society he moves in. It is not here contended that these men play false to their class—they sometimes rather act the proletarian in a manner almost snobbish among their new friends and drop their aitches, sounded meticulously for twenty years, with new and provocative fluency.

But they seem so dazzled by the glamour of society, so fascinated by the luxurious atmosphere of "swell" dinners and the fragrance of real Corona-Coronas that without either wishing or knowing it they become conservative to the marrow of their bones. They are only distinguishable from the working-man who has been appointed chief of the

Conservative Party organisation in belonging to a different parliamentary team.

Men like Arthur Henderson and Clynes belong to the sympathetic class of Labour leader who, in spite of their social advance, have never lost real contact with their movement. They are safe, homely men, in whose hands the continuity of the party as a working-class organisation is assured. They have none of the vanity of the *homo politicus*. They serve the movement and are always in harmony with its mood. They are not affected by fluctuations on the political exchange. They are gilt edged securities, and lend the British Labour movement that inner stability that is threatened beyond all doubt by the inrush of new men.

Men like "Uncle Arthur" and J. R. Clynes (whose style as a speaker has a poise, articulation and richness of language, compared with which the Oxford diction of certain young men of the Party sounds unbearably affected) are products which the British Labour Party can justly regard with pride. No other proletariat in the world has brought forth men who—like these—combine the best qualities of the working-man with such ease in the assumption of responsibility and so much aplomb in the bearing of its burdens.

In spite of slight fluctuations in reputation, these

men maintain their old position in the party, although round about them significant changes are in progress that in the course of the next two Parliaments may effect a radical alteration in the whole aspect of the party. With Stephen Walsh a great tradition, but scarcely more than a tradition, disappeared. With the departure of Bob Smillie goes a large portion of Labour history; with Sidney Webb the greatest theoretician the Labour Party has ever had. But in terms of purely parliamentary weight, whether from increasing age or lack of compatibility, their voluntary retirement will not make the difference their contributions and significance elsewhere would imply.

But the change in position and attitude towards the leaders of the younger and intermediate generation is, judged both by human and political standards, more interesting than the eclipse of the older men.

This process is now taking place under our very eyes, and is presented most remarkably in the fall of J. Wheatley, once a figure to inspire respect and even fear in the hearts of his political opponents. This Glasgow business man is probably the most inscrutable among all who have risen to any eminence during the last ten years, and his inscrutability has that same bewildering quality we find on first

contact with Orientals. His countenance as man and politician wears an impenetrable mask. Deeply religious, a devout Roman Catholic, the link between his religious feelings and his political Radicalism has not yet been discovered. Whatever Radicalism can be discerned in him is far different from that which arises from the warm humanity of other deeply religious men among prominent Labour leaders of the type of George Lansbury. In Wheatley religion and politics seem to live on separate planets and meet only when technically dogmatic problems such as birth-control are under discussion. This fanaticism seems to spring not from the warmth of his heart but from the ice of his brain. It is purely intellectual, with a strange and deathly rigidity. When he speaks he gives the impression of an automaton, mechanically developing its argument, inhibited by no trace of human weakness. Unpopular, and mistrusted even by his closest friends, Wheatley as an individual is immensely interesting, but as a political type sterile.

For this reason it is one of those political paradoxes of which England's history is so full, that this man, a rootless Radical, should with his Housing Act have become one of the few real assets that will preserve MacDonald's first Government in history. Once the most formidable figure of the British

Labour left, and even a challenge to the leadership of MacDonald in the eyes of Party and Parliament, to-day he has become politically almost insignificant and, it would seem, resigned to his fate. A certain lawsuit, even though tacitly ignored in Labour circles, seems to have put an end to all his chances and to have broken his *élan*.

Arthur Ponsonby's eclipse is less dramatic. Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1924 and a possible Minister for Foreign Affairs in any future Labour Cabinet, to-day he is of little consequence as a political factor. He has identified himself publicly with an international movement for individual abstention from war activities, and this is the outward turning point of his career. It would seem that a sensitive public opinion has felt that an ex-Minister of the Crown, and especially one whose province lay in foreign affairs, should not be connected with propaganda for the total refusal of any war service. If this is true, it is a typical instance of the changes in choice of leadership effected by impending governmental responsibility, and a saddening reminder of the possible dangers of omitting to be an opportunist. But however this may be, it would appear that Ponsonby, a man personally delightful but intellectually insignificant, has permanently lost contact with the main stream of the movement.

And those who are rising, the coming men? So far as the driving forces that lead to influence and general notoriety are concerned, Sir Oswald Mosley is easily ahead. Although only little more than thirty, he adds to the traditional make-up of the British governing classes an immersion in politics of a rare and passionate intensity, and a power of swaying audiences of all kinds that is seldom met with, and may one day put him in the ranks of the historic orators of Great Britain.

Young Mosley not only desires power; he is willing to earn it by unsparing energy and sleepless devotion to the task in hand. The secret of his advance lies in the fact that he is more of a hard worker than even his closest associates imagine. Two years ago nobody in the Labour Party took him seriously, and the majority of his fellow members in the House merely distrusted him. To-day, of the younger members of the Party, he is even under discussion as a potential leader.

The danger is that his ambitions may carry him prematurely to a position that will induce a reaction so strong as to wreck his career and cause him to be shelved before he has had time to show what he could really do. That danger is not without foundation in the present mood and trend of the party. His future depends largely on whether he can learn

patience and whether he realises that in a politician the virtue of waiting is often more important than the art of striking at the right moment.

Is Hugh Dalton destined for the highest office? He is not flashy like Mosley, and in the party his position is welded by closer bonds of affection and respect. Intellectually he is made of incomparably better stuff. He has all the advantages of an academic position, and none of the disadvantages of the academic manner. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to reconcile the economic theorist and the apparently passionate orator. He could more easily be considered for the future leadership of the party were it not for the possibility that his technical equipment might anchor him in the more exacting position of Chancellor of the Exchequer, President of the Board of Trade, or any other post of particular importance in a Socialist administration.

Personally I consider possible that a future party leader may ultimately not be found in the ranks of the eligibles, but that the choice may fall upon some man who to-day is moving in an atmosphere of partial or complete anonymity. Is there not a great future in the Party for the self-sacrificing, simple, honest and retiring devotion of Herbert Morrison or the unusual logical powers of a born leader like Walter Citrine? But Citrine, like Ernest Bevin, will

probably elect to make his position in the Labour movement assured through the purely industrial side. In the past the Labour party has drained away the commanding brains from the trade unions, often to their detriment. In the future, it is likely, the two careers will be kept more distinct, and the two types of administrator and leader will grow up side by side.

Arthur Greenwood's prestige during the last few years has been so enhanced by hard, sound work that he is certain to be assigned to one of the more ungrateful and most difficult posts in any Administration.

Similarly, it can be expected that men like Charles Roden Buxton, who, known as a Socialist in two continents, has for years suffered eclipse in England, will at last emerge, and his years of unselfish and self-effacing labour will be rewarded in a successful, but minor, political future.

Of the new recruits, Wedgwood Benn won the party's strongest sympathies and confidence almost without effort and would strengthen any Government. On the other hand, Commander Kenworthy must remain a dark horse, and perhaps will remain so until the end of his political career.

So far as concerns the younger men of the Party, it will be wise to keep an eye on Philip Baker,

Philips Price, John Strachey, and E. F. Wise for the Front Bench of future Parliaments. And what about the ladies? Among the four women Labour members of the 1924-29 Parliament the only outstanding political figure was Miss Susan Lawrence, who may be said to possess the strongest if most blinkered intellect; Miss Margaret Bondfield is the most politically expert, and Miss Ellen Wilkinson the most human and sympathetic. Young Miss Jenny Lee can, in view of her promising beginning, be regarded as the woman with the biggest potential political future in Great Britain; but only if she succeeds in steering her barque between the Charybdis of the "left wing" which gave her her political chance and the Scylla of social temptations. Labour possesses in Dr. Marion Phillips an excellent propagandist who, in spite of her Australian origin, strikes the eye of the observer as a typical Continental phenomenon. Lady Cynthia Mosley is a sympathetic figure, devoid herself of all the snobbery that seems to pursue her. She is undoubtedly the most eloquent and debonair figure in the Socialist world, whether here or abroad.

In addition to these politicians in the peculiar and narrow sense of the word there are a group of varsity dons who, in contrast to Hugh Dalton, Lees-Smith and Philip Baker, have so far shown small political

ambitions, but who for real influence in the Labour Party can vie with any dozen parliamentarians—the redoubtable quartet formed by G. D. H. Cole, Harold Laski, C. M. Lloyd and R. H. Tawney. All four are distinguished by their high intellectual gifts and their devotion to the workers' cause. Here, if anywhere, are the first class brains of Great Britain. Desiring no seats in Parliament or advertised political influence these university teachers are the most remarkable power behind the throne known to any Labour Party in the world. Were philosophers kings in politics it would be to such men that the Labour Party would go for its leaders. In any other party, did they choose to devote themselves to Parliament, they would assume equally commanding position. But the philosophers do not always choose to be kings. (Even a Liberal philosopher like Mr. Keynes keeps out of the platform fight.) Yet if G. D. H. Cole, with his eloquence, his quick (almost too quick) gift of repartee and debating skill, and his omniscience, could be brought to throw himself into politics and could learn to suffer fools more gladly one would not care to impose limits on prophecy.

Taken all in all, it would appear to a foreign observer of the Labour Party that it has inherited in its rise to power full measure and even more of

the undoubted political gifts of the nation of which it is so integral a part. Side by side with men of the older generation, there is that generation in the thirties and forties from which the Labour Party has recruited an imposing array of talents, and one which is in no way inferior to its seniors both in political intelligence and qualities of personality. It would seem to the foreigner indeed that the more representative sections of the generation on which the war made its greatest impression, or which awoke to consciousness during its tumult, have sought definite alliance with Labour. Be this as it may, it is certain that the Labour Party will continue to foster that extreme good fortune of the British peoples, the continuity from generation to generation of political traditions and genius. In a few years' time the Labour Party will be excellently equipped to meet the critical period of its existence with which my closing chapter deals.

iii : THE FUTURE OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

It is in no way the purpose of this study to indulge in prophecies concerning immediate political developments in Great Britain. Of all the new factors in British politics, the young woman is perhaps the most interesting. The problem of these

young women has, according to characteristic British custom, been discussed in the months preceding the General Election (May, 1929) as if it were an entirely unprecedented venture into which Great Britain was taking a headlong plunge. The average newspaper reader would, I fancy, be extremely surprised to learn that at least a dozen Continental countries have had more than ten years' experience of an unrestricted female franchise. British insularity has once more celebrated one of its peculiar triumphs.

The position of the British woman towards the political parties is psychologically very different from the position on the Continent. There the women electors are an undoubted support of the Conservative cause. One of the chief contributing factors to this state of affairs is the fact that the Continental Socialist parties, because of their past, are greatly hampered by the odium of anti-religious propaganda; moreover, their outspoken and rational attitude on questions of sexual ethics, the identification of these parties with "birth control," easier divorce and similar views, have without any doubt deterred many women electors whose minds are strongly rooted in tradition and conventional ideas from voting for the Socialist parties. The British Labour Party has never allied itself with particular

philosophic views, never harboured in its ranks a strong free-thinking movement, and has strictly refrained from taking any decided stand on the above-mentioned questions of sexual ethics. By adopting a neutral, often even a conservative, attitude on all such questions, the Labour Party has always made it impossible for its political opponents to attack it on this front. There is a further factor to be taken into account, which is inherent in the character of British Socialism itself: the Labour Party is more emotional, the language of its orators is not lumbered up with pseudo-scientific expressions, and this enables it to adapt itself to the mental and emotional spheres of the women electors more easily than is possible with the class-war theories of Continental Socialism. On the whole, it would not be going far wrong to prophesy that, in all the great political decisions of the coming years, the Labour Party will succeed in attracting to its side a greater proportion of the women voters than the Continental Socialist parties have been able to do.

But, whatever view may be taken of the immediate prospects of the Labour Party in the next few years, one thing seems certain—that the Labour Party in the next ten years will temporarily attain to full parliamentary power. If that be the case, the pros-

pect opens up a number of extraordinarily serious problems. Only the deeply-rooted Anglo-Saxon aversion to thinking out future crises and decisions can explain the fact that these questions have as yet scarcely been discussed at all. The party quite clearly relies on the belief that the political genius of the British nation, which has been proved in innumerable past emergencies, will again find the right improvisation at the right moment. It also relies on those reserve forces which the nation has drawn upon in every national emergency, whenever her fate was hanging on a single hair.

From whatever side we approach the question of the future of the British Labour Party, we always come up against the problem of the present electoral system, in which the gambling, betting and sporting instincts of the nation seem to have found their characteristic political expression. The reform of the electoral law is, of course, qualitatively not the most important question with which the Socialist movement in Great Britain is faced. The solution of the unemployment problem, the question of the nationalisation of the mines and the public control of the land are much more urgent. Nevertheless, it might appear to the foreign observer as if the solution of these problems required measures which call for the full capacity of the democratic machine,

and that this capacity is seriously imperilled by the continued existence of the present electoral law.

The Labour Party, as already stated earlier in the book, advocated a reform of the present electoral law; it has since changed its attitude, and at present confines itself to advocating the removal of certain minor blemishes, without desiring the abolition of the present electoral system as such; for, compared with the serious abuses of the system, the plural voting and the university votes which the Labour Party object to are mere trifles. Thus the Labour Party to-day gives its assent to the present electoral law, even to the extent of abandoning the attack on the Baldwin Government as a minority government, and leaving all controversy on this point to the Liberals. They take this attitude because, as already stated, they see in the present electoral system a possibility of securing a parliamentary majority in the near future. Their view is that, in a period in which the parliaments of practically all the democratically governed countries of Europe are hampered in their working by the impossibility of obtaining clear majorities, the principle of exact justice must be sacrificed to political expediency. This is reinforced by the hope that, by means of the electoral system, the Liberal Party will be wiped out as rapidly as possible.

In the following pages, an attempt will be made to point out the most dangerous results which the maintenance of the present electoral system may have both for the Labour Party itself and for the constitutional stability of Great Britain. In making this attempt, however, I must first dissociate myself entirely from those Cassandra-like cries of Lord Birkenhead, Winston Churchill, and other less significant professional anti-Socialists which work upon the instincts of self-preservation in shop-keepers, shareholders and elderly spinsters, by conjuring up the spectre of the disorganisation of Great Britain under Socialist rule. The dangers of which I am thinking do not spring from the nature of any proposed measure of Socialism, such as nationalisation, the super-tax, etc., but rather from the technical difficulties in the way of their realisation presented by the traditional legislative machinery. In fact, these dangers are the direct and organic consequence of the present electoral law, and they are twofold: first the formation of majorities without a majority of the votes of the electors, that is, " sham " majorities, and secondly, the perpetuation of the swing of the pendulum between Government and Opposition.

The first of these dangers, a majority based on a sham parliamentary majority, has only become a

serious problem in very recent times. In the second half of the nineteenth century there was, in consequence of the special position of the parties, a certain guarantee that the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary majorities largely coincided; but, with the rapid rise of the Labour Party, artificial parliamentary majorities will be the rule so long as the Liberal Party is in the field as an active force and a third party.

If this danger is mentioned to British friends they, whether Socialist or Conservative, wave it away with the remark that the Liberal Party is doomed, and will sooner or later be crushed between the millstones of the two other parties. This appears to be axiomatic to millions of people. Is it in fact sound? I am inclined to think that, by a mechanical reference to certain events of the nineteenth century, a development is being introduced into political calculations as a probability which cannot be objectively substantiated. I have no intention of attempting to enumerate the economic and sociological reasons which make the disappearance of the Liberal Party seem extremely improbable; I merely wish to point out that the financial foundations of this party would appear to ensure its continued existence for a long time to come.

Thus, the Liberal Party—to some extent independently of its successes at the polls—remains a factor in the situation, a factor which by its mere existence influences political decisions to a degree far in excess of its own prospects of success. In other words, although in the next ten years the Liberals may gain far less than a hundred seats at the elections, the existence of several hundred Liberal candidates will have a far-reaching influence on the voting. Parliamentary majorities not based on an absolute majority of the electorate will become a permanent institution in British politics. British political thought, which still regards the two-party system as the standard by which to measure all other systems, will have in the near future to reckon with three parties competing for power, and to break itself of the habit of estimating a party's political importance by its prospects of parliamentary success.

Since it is likely that the next advance of the Labour Party will take place under the rule of a three-party system, it is highly probable that the first Labour majority or majorities in Parliament will represent an artificial majority of the same kind as that of the Baldwin Government. In the ranks of the Labour Party, where the prospect is faced with incomprehensible equanimity, it seems to be assumed

that what was sauce for the Baldwin goose will also be sauce for the gander of a future Labour Government. They seem to think that the British nation will submit to a Labour Party majority as a matter of course, in the same way as they have submitted to a Conservative administration. This is, however, I am inclined to think, a serious mistake in political psychology.

Continental experience seems to go to show that the Baldwin Government (1924-29) will form no precedent for a Socialist Government. The inner law of British Conservatism directs a British Conservative Government to the maintenance of the existing institutions and to moderate progress; whereas a Socialist administration must attempt a radical reform of society. The objective errors of a Conservative Government, therefore, consist, as a rule, rather of omissions than of positive measures. Now omissions are undoubtedly dangerous in tense, revolutionary situations; but no one will seriously maintain that in Great Britain there is the slightest sign of any such tension in the body politic, or that Great Britain is in a position in which the end can be attained only by a series of explosions. The danger is all the less if this Conservative administration, at the point of relatively greatest tension in the social sphere, enjoys the qualified agreement of

the other two parties by its moderate extension of socio-political institutions.

A Labour Government with an artificial majority, however, is in quite a different psychological position from a Conservative administration. In contrast to the Conservative Government, which can count on a certain amount of support for all its progressive measures from the other two parties and on the consent of the majority of the population, a Socialist Government, in carrying out any measure that aims at the democratisation of trade and industry, is acting against the economic interests of all its opponents, and has to depend solely on itself. Moreover, as certain Continental experiences have shown, many adherents of the Socialist parties, in the course of carrying out Socialistic measures, become alarmed at their own boldness and drop out of the fight.

Their necessarily experimental character, and the fear of the new, mean that progressive steps on the way to Socialism call for an incomparably greater coefficient of safety, a larger margin than is the case with Conservative Governments. With a Labour Government, more than with any other, the number of votes expressing the will of the electors, the distribution of seats in Parliament, and political power must be proportionately equal. It

is a fundamental fact that government by a parliamentary majority representing only a minority of a nation can function only if the whole political and economic machinery, not to mention the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, supports the executive, for if any Government comes into psychological or material conflict with the Army, with capital and perhaps also with the Civil Service, it will break down. The fact that these elements are, psychologically, at least neutral towards Conservative and Liberal Government makes it possible for minority governments of these parties to govern; a Socialist Government would have to reckon, partially at least, on their becoming hostile forces. For a Socialist Government the danger is infinitely greater that mere exercise of power, from the moment it deviates from the conventional, will be felt as an abuse of power.

And this feeling that power has been abused reacts, as experience shows, on a government of the Left much more rapidly than on a Conservative or Liberal Government, because capital has at its disposal incomparably greater and more powerful machinery for influencing public opinion, because the instincts of the greater part of the Civil Service and the Army will be opposed to the majority of these new measures, and because fear of the new—

as various referenda on the Continent have proved —will make itself felt as one of the chief retarding factors.

All this is, however, merely one side of the dangers directly involved in the existence of the present British electoral law. Let us assume, however, that the Liberal Party—although it seems at the moment (April 1929) full of energy—has disappeared by a miracle, and that a period of artificial majorities has been succeeded by a period of genuine majorities.

The main problem, continuity of development, is no more assured than before by this; on the contrary, there remains as before the uncertainty about the assignment of power, which has long seemed to the foreign observer one of the main characteristics of the present electoral system. What would happen, presumably, would be a succession of Conservative and Socialist parliamentary majorities, simply because it cannot be assumed that this electoral system, from the moment of the first assignment of power to the Socialists, will permanently assure to them a majority.

It would, however, be wrong to regard such a probable swing of the pendulum between Conservative and Socialist governments as a repetition, on a higher coil of the spiral, of the alternative Liberal and Conservative governments of the second

half of the nineteenth century. There is a difference in kind here.

The struggle between the Conservative and Liberal parties, violently as it was waged, was not a struggle on different planes. Both parties took their stand on the ground of the same economic order, and were entirely at one in their attitude to the foundations of the social order. Moreover, as Lord Balfour states in his introduction to a new edition of Bagehot's *English Constitution*, " our whole political machine of Great Britain presupposes a people so fundamentally at one that they can safely afford to bicker; and so sure of their moderation that they are not dangerously disturbed by the never-ending din of political conflict." This is entirely applicable to the Conservatives and Liberals in the last decades of the nineteenth century, even though they may not have been conscious of this inner identity.

With the political rise of the Labour Party, a force entered the political arena which, both subjectively in its own consciousness and objectively in the substance of its claims, became more and more detached from Conservatives and Liberals. The Labour Party may externally have taken over in many ways the heritage of Liberal Radicalism; but it was its profession of Socialism, its conscious opposition to the existing social order, which had

proved itself incapable of satisfying the needs and desires of the people, that led to its emergence as the official Opposition and the alternative government party. Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain why the Liberal Party, in spite of all its socio-political zeal, from a certain moment onwards found it no longer possible to secure the votes of the workers.

The rise of the Labour Party meant, in fact, that there were now two alternative and opposed Governments parties, whose vital needs and aspirations were separated by a wide gulf. Further, the rise of the Labour Party meant that the fundamental inner uniformity, the consciousness of mutual moderation of which Lord Balfour spoke, the gambling and sporting character of politics, underwent a great limitation. Even though the MacDonalds, Hendersons and Snowdens may have wished to carry on unbroken the parliamentary traditions of the past, even though the Mosleys, Trevelyans and Ponsonbys, in their upbringing, social origin and education, resemble their opponents on the " other side of the House " far more than they do many of their neighbours on the benches of the Labour Party, the specific gravity of the ideas they represent is, perhaps for the first time in the history of Great Britain, as strong as, if not stronger than, the

conventions of tradition. The old homogeneity is, in consequence, no longer possible; not maybe because the leaders are immune to tradition, or because they have rejected it, but because they consider the aspirations and needs of the masses who have sent them to Parliament as more essential, and therefore they have turned away from the old notions of the political struggle. In their opponents' camp this policy is nearly always interpreted as pure demagogy.

The new situation, as a matter of practical politics, thus means that a party which stands on the existing economic order is faced by a party whose function and aim are the transformation of the structure of this society. In future, therefore, there would be in Great Britain two opposing parties, whose measures largely neutralise each other. A Conservative Government which follows a Socialist Government in these conditions would find itself in a very different position from that of its predecessors in the time of the alternation between Liberal and Conservative Governments. In particular it would be quite impossible for it, by the inner law of its being and the will of its constituents, to maintain the specifically Socialist measures of its predecessor. To use the language of sport, the picture of the political stadium at this date would no longer be the familiar

picture of two football teams or two cricket teams, but rather one of a cricket team opposing a football team, so that no conventional game would be possible.

At this point, with administrations which neutralise each other, the stability of the social, economic, and political structure of Great Britain would be seriously endangered. In the case described earlier, of abuse of power by a Government with an artificial majority, only a certain amount of confusion could be caused; but, in this case, with the pendulum swinging between two governments which neutralise each other, all the elements of a real crisis would be present. Great Britain would be threatened with a constitutional crisis, a thing which has not happened for centuries. Capital would send the forces it has never yet mobilised into the field against the working-classes; high finance would artificially foster and foment all the elements of a financial and credit panic; and both in the Army and the Civil Service the deep conservative instincts of these bodies, which represent the continuity of the State, would act as forces against a Socialist administration. In the end, there would probably arise, even in Great Britain, a movement "against politics," the spectre of Fascism translated into British terms.

Our generation in various Continental countries

has passed through situations outwardly quite different, but essentially similar. They afford unanimous evidence that, in cases of this kind, provided that the political machinery is not broken down, as happened in Russia, the specific gravity of the Labour parties, even if they have a majority in Parliament, proves to be less than that of the middle-class opponents allied against them.

Under the present electoral system, the only alternative to such a development is a fundamental change in the policy of the Labour Party. The view may generally be held in the enemy camp that the Labour Party is too British, too moderate at heart, too much of the same flesh and blood as its opponents, ever to let things come to such a cleavage. It is believed that, in such circumstances, the Labour Party would transform or re-form itself into a new Liberal Party, with a stronger emphasis on the social reform side of its policy. The old sporting character of politics would in this way once more be saved. The cricket team would become a football team, and the old political game could begin.

But such a situation would be charged with other new dangers, which would result from the direct surrender by the Labour Party of the specifically Socialist elements in its programme. It is highly improbable that the millions of workers organised

in trade unions would accept without a murmur this surrender of Socialism. Trained to regard parliamentary majorities as the standard of power, these masses readily understood the abandonment of Socialistic measures by the minority Labour Government of 1924; they would never understand why a majority Labour Government did not try to carry out what they have been promising for many years. Disillusionment, and its concomitant apathy, on the part of one section, and avowed radicalisation of the other—probably larger—section of the British Labour movement, would be the result of such a liberalising of the Labour Party. Ultimately it would give rise to a question of confidence in the leadership of the party, to profound internal confusion, and perhaps to a cleavage. The gain in stability thus won in Parliament for British political life would be accompanied by a simultaneous loss of extra-parliamentary support for the Labour Party from the majority of its constituents. The question of the reform of the present electoral law, with its irrational, gambling features, has thus become a vital question for British Socialism and the Labour Party.

In these circumstances, it seems to me that the sympathetic scorn with which the Labour camp frequently looks upon the Continental Socialists because they advocate proportional representation

is not quite justified. It is true that it entangles the Socialists deeply in the intricacies of coalition politics, and makes it impossible for them to unfold their banners and chant their slogans with freedom. But at least it leads to a clear parliamentary reflection of the real balance of power, and does not create illusions. True, it demands from the Socialist electorate an enormously high degree of moderation, maturity, self-control, discipline, and sober political thinking; but at least it shows that, in the age of " equilibrium of class forces," things do not admit of a sharply defined point; here Socialists, there anti-Socialists, here Labour, there bourgeoisie. Moreover, it guarantees that the progress attained is accomplished constitutionally and is a real progress. Although it may multiply minor crises, it has, in a country like Germany, prevented unprecedentedly difficult emergencies or aided in overcoming them. It is quite untrue to say that proportional representation has been a failure.

Of course, no one who has seen how this system has mechanised politics in Cental Europe, hindered personal development and confused almost immeasurably the responsibilities of the various parties, will recommend this electoral system with its entirely geometrical beauty and its practical ugliness as the ideal. It would seem, nevertheless, that some

sort of electoral law which combines the advantages of the Central European and the British systems, which is less favourable to wild swings of the pendulum, and which does not impose such great responsibilities, would be more in harmony with the special conditions of present-day politics.

The future of the Labour Party will depend on whether, recognising the dangers which threaten it from the attempt to maintain both its Socialistic basis and the existing electoral law, it takes up the struggle for the democratisation of the franchise. The indifference of the leader of the Labour Party, Ramsay MacDonald, towards the question of electoral reform seems, therefore, to be fraught with real peril for the future of the Party. It would be a tragic spectacle for those who look upon the Labour movement with sympathy, although not without some criticism, if the wonderful *élan* and the reforming will that burns in the British Labour movement like a sacred flame, were to be destroyed because the movement has neglected to create the external as well as the internal conditions for the carrying out of its mission. The eyes of millions of Socialists all over the world are fixed upon the British Labour Party, which seems to possess a bigger chance of putting into effect an instalment of Socialism than any other Socialist party in

existence. The Labour Party to-day is the one great hope of the democratic Socialism of the world. If it is defeated, or if it transforms itself back into a Liberal party, international Socialism will have lost its Battle of the Marne.

The political opponent of the Labour Party, the anti-Socialist by creed or principle, may regard this prospect of the end of Socialism or the Labour Party as joyful tidings, and may quite honestly hope with all his heart that the political genius of the British nation will prove itself in this liquidation of Socialism as a factor in politics. This notion, curiously enough, has penetrated deeply into the ranks of the Labour Party, and is to be attributed to the mistaken view that Socialism is a creed imposed from the outside upon the working class movements of Europe. It is true that Socialism as a doctrine and a system was not conceived by the workers themselves, and that, for the greater part, it was the work of men outside the working-classes. But their thoughts would have remained sterile if they had not appealed to something already existing in the soul of the European proletariat. The power Socialism has exercised in the last decades over millions and tens of millions in a dozen European countries has only been possible because Socialism stands for that economic system and

social order in which the manual worker takes a place in the structure on completely equal terms, not only politically, but also economically and socially. Only those who are totally blind to the roots from which Socialism draws its strength can advocate the view that the renunciation of Socialism by the Labour Party would mean the end of Socialism in Great Britain, the end of the hopes, dreams, and desires which created political Socialism. It would destroy neither Socialism itself nor the desire of Socialists to express their will in political power. The renunciation of Socialism by the Labour Party could only mean for Great Britain that the old forces, now allied to the Labour Party, would organise in a non-democratic manner, which would perhaps endanger the existence of the nation; they might, even in Great Britain, become explosive social material. No one who desires the building up of civilisation, a steady evolution, a permanent, natural incorporation of the working-classes in the life of the nation can advocate the ruin of democratic Socialism either in Great Britain or any other European country. Socialism to-day is the vent for the desires of a whole class and its aspirations after economic democracy; it is the legitimate expression of its desires, as the Liberal demands once were the legitimate expression of the wishes of the middle-

classes. Anyone who stops up this vent should be aware that he is thus exposing the whole social structure to terrible danger.

The desire for the preservation of the specifically Socialist element in the Labour Party, therefore, is not necessarily the expression of revolutionary or even of progressive sentiments. It is entirely reconcilable with conservatism, in the higher, non-party sense, with a conservatism to which the maintenance of the continuity of development of humanity as a whole is more important than dead traditions and the preservation of temporary interests. That this kind of conservatism is lacking seems to me to be one of the disastrous elements in present-day world politics.

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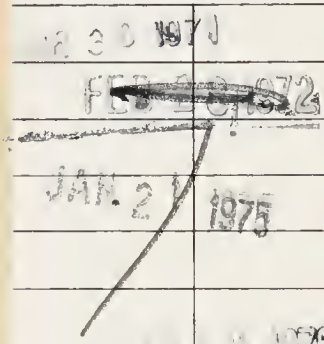

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